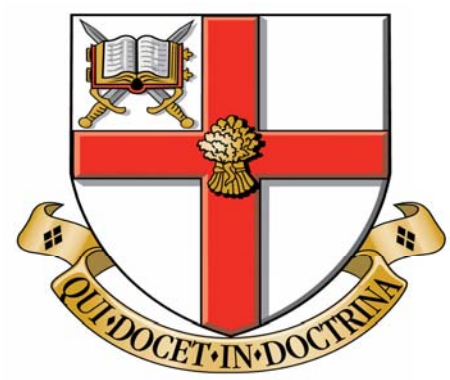

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Title: The 'social-realist' phase in the painting of Luke Fildes, Hubert Herkomer, and Frank Holl: The making and unmaking of a sub-genre

Date: October 2007

Originally published as: University of Chester MA dissertation

THE 'SOCIAL-REALIST' PHASE IN THE PAINTING OF LUKE FILDES, HUBERT HERKOMER, AND FRANK HOLL: THE MAKING AND UNMAKING OF A SUB-GENRE

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October 2007

The 'Social-Realist' Phase in the Painting of Luke Fildes, Hubert Herkomer and Frank Holl: the Making and Unmaking of a Sub-Genre

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

The three Victorian artists, Luke Fildes, Hubert Herkomer and Frank Holl are commonly grouped together through the similarities in their careers. All emerged partly or mainly through their drawings for the *Graphic* magazine; all used images of the poor created for this work as motifs for major paintings which have come to be called 'social-realist', and all went on to devote their careers largely to portraiture. Yet to group them in this way, and to apply the 'social-realist' label can be deeply misleading, firstly because they never worked together as a 'movement' with an ideology or manifesto, secondly because the label has much more radical or socially-critical connotations as applied to other movements of that name in the 20th century, and thirdly because it was applied only retrospectively in the 20th century in the wake of those movements, implying ideological comparability.

Standard art works of reference commonly present social-realism in art as an international phenomenon, tracing its origins to the French Realism of Millet and Courbet, with its literary counterpart in the realism of Zola. In the 20th century, the main movements cited are the Ashcan School in the US, the *Neue Sachlichkeit* ('New Objectivity') of Weimar Germany and the Kitchen Sink School in Britain. Guttoso in Italy and the Mexican muralists such as Diego Rivera are also cited, appearing to occupy a mid-way position between social realism and *socialist* realism, exemplified most fully in the official propagandist art of the Soviet State. Victorian 'social-realism', however, is not usually given prominence, if it is mentioned at all, though the *Grove Dictionary of Art* does mention Fildes, Herkomer, Holl and William Small, citing work from the *Graphic*, and its influence on van Gogh.

However, the first labelling of Fildes, Herkomer and Holl as 'social-realist', by Graham Reynolds in 1953,[1] marked the beginning of new stirrings of interest in Victorian art and in these painters, after half a century in eclipse following the rise of modernism. Various books and academic studies have appeared, and exhibitions have been mounted.

A travelling Arts Council exhibition in 1974/5, 'English Influences on Vincent van Gogh', identified as a major influence on van Gogh 'an unjustly forgotten group of English illustrators' including Fildes, Herkomer and Holl in their work for the *Graphic* magazine. In 1982, there was an exhibition, 'Herkomer – A Passion for Work' at Watford Museum, the first major exhibition of Herkomer's work since his death in 1914. And in 1987/8 a large exhibition at Manchester City Art Gallery entitled 'Hard Times – Social Realism in Victorian Art' stretched the term 'social-realist' to cover a great many works from the whole of the Victorian period. The catalogue noted that '[T]his is the first exhibition of Victorian social-realist painting to be held in this country' (It travelled on to the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam, and to the Yale Center for British Art in the US). The Manchester catalogue also argued that

> The artists associated with the *Graphic* shared a common, though sporadic concern with scenes of lower-class life and its difficulties. But the 1870s had no monopoly of social realism. There was throughout Victoria's reign a sub-stream of paintings not just depicting the poor, but depicting them in the light of social problems. Emigration, charity, homelessness, poverty, unemployment and alcoholism were seen in fine art and indeed in illustration before the 1870s and continued in the work of late Victorian artists[2].

Among modern art critics, opinion as to the place to be given to Victorian art and in particular to the work of Fildes, Herkomer and Holl, ranges from the respectful to the relatively dismissive to the downright antagonistic, as in the following:

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[1] Cited by Borzello F, *The Relationship of Fine Art and the Poor in Late Nineteenth Century England*, PhD thesis, University College, University of London (1980), p 206.

[2] Treuherz J. ed., *Hard Times, Social Realism in Victorian Art*, Manchester City Art Galleries (1987), Introduction, p 9.

> Sensing that madness was a constant threat to them, later Victorians desperately took refuge from lunacy in an affected indifference to the big questions they found so troubling. Not to care was to be safe, even if it was also to produce rather poor art. Later Victorian painting is a grim business, oscillating between mercenary indifference and a pained, enervating lassitude.
>
> Like a virus, Victorian cynicism took many forms. It resulted in the hypocritical careers of later painters of social concern, men like Luke Fildes or Hubert von Herkomer, who dabbled in scenes of poverty and hardship but ended up as wealthy portrait painters living in large houses in St John's Wood, London'[3]

Were there, then, many social-realists in Victorian art, or were there few, and these cynical hypocrites to a man? Put another way, questions arise as to both the definition and evaluation of Victorian 'social-realism'; and these, very broadly, are the questions which this dissertation will seek to address. In doing so, consideration will be given to the artistic influences, historical or contemporary, bearing on Victorian artists, and to the social and professional world in which they lived. Against this background, the 'sub-stream of social concern' detected in Victorian painting will be assessed, and, in greater detail, the work of Fildes, Herkomer and Holl, including their formative work as illustrators for *The Graphic*, and their influence through the *Graphic* on Vincent van Gogh. The personal provenances and motivations of Fildes, Herkomer and Holl will also be considered, to the extent that these may bear on their attitudes to social questions and on their move to portraiture.

Given the importance of the rise of Victorian pictorial journalism leading to the establishment of the *Graphic*, an overview of this subject is provided in Appendix I. Additionally, given the over-arching importance of the state of Victorian society and the problem of poverty to any discussion of these problems as reflected in art, an overview of the Victorian Poor Law, and of Victorian perceptions of, and reactions to, poverty in Victorian society is given in Appendix II.

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[3] Graham-Dixon A, *A History of British Art*, BBC Books (1996), p 188. He also attacks Hogarth, p 100. In his Introduction to this book, published to accompany a television series, Graham-Dixon says: 'The ambition behind this book is simple: to help myself and others to understand and love British art a little bit more'.

Finally, as a general framework to the discussion of a ‘social-realist’ sub-genre in Victorian art, the proposition is advanced that this sub-genre may be seen as a ‘making and unmaking’, associated with certain conditions – cultural, economic and technological – in the environment of the time, which had a beginning and an end more or less coterminous with the Victorian age itself.

PART I THE MAKING

CHAPTER 1 THE BRITISH SCHOOL OF PAINTING

It is part of the argument presented here that the social conditions and attitudes to poverty described in Appendix II form a necessary background to consideration of the Victorian 'social-realist' artists. It is also considered necessary, however, to view them in relation to their artistic inheritance, and in the context of the art world in which they existed and worked.

In regard to artistic inheritance, it is often said that there was no indigenous 'British School' of art before the eighteenth century, or more particularly before the establishment of the Royal Academy (RA) in 1768 – more than a century after the establishment of the Académie Royale in Paris, which itself derived from sixteenth century Italian models. Church patronage in England had ceased with the Reformation, and the monarchy and aristocracy obtained their art, and artists, largely from continental sources. But the eighteenth century saw the emergence of what might be called two British schools, exemplified in the persons of Sir Joshua Reynolds (1723 – 92), first President of the RA, who advocated the High Art of continental tradition, and William Hogarth (1697 – 1764) who is associated in the main with quite a different kind of art. This dichotomy between the 'Reynolds' school and the 'Hogarth' school had important influences on the art and art criticism of the Victorian age[4].

[4] In his Discourse No.3, Reynolds condemns Hogarth's kind of art with faint praise, commenting that 'the praise we give must be as limited as its object'. (See Wark R R (ed), Reynolds J, Discourses on Art, Yale UP (1997), p 51).

High Art was a matter of both content and form, and involved a hierarchy of genres, with 'history' painting at the top, followed by portraiture. History painting would normally be on the grand scale, treated in an idealized and generalized manner, portraying scenes from religion, or from classical history or mythology, relating to the deeds of people 'greater than ourselves' At the bottom of the hierarchy of genres came the 'genre' painting itself, the term used here in its particular sense to apply to paintings usually on a smaller scale and painted with realistic attention to detail, portraying everyday scenes from the lives of people 'like ourselves or worse than ourselves'. Reynolds himself achieved his international celebrity not as a 'history' painter but chiefly as a portraitist (fig.1)[5], which provides an interesting commentary on the careers of Fildes, Herkomer and Holl a century later. The Royal Academy did not, however, succeed in creating a strong British school of history painting, and Hogarth, though he did himself at times venture into High Art, for most of his career and much more typically, saw himself in opposition to it.

Hogarth for his part had a varied output, including the famous engravings, paintings on the same themes (figs.2 and 3), and the conversation pieces and portraits. But his greatest influence was certainly through his series of satirical and moralizing prints, charting with much use of symbolic detail, the various routes to perdition taken by the rake, the harlot and the idle apprentice – of people, that is, presumably rather worse than ourselves[6].

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[5] Nikolaus Pevsner refers to this painting as 'the portrait raised to a general idea', and notes its allusions to Michelangelo's prophets from the Sistine ceiling. Pevsner N, *The Englishness of English Art*, first[t] pub. 1956, Penguin 1997, p 60.

[6] The iconography of the prints and paintings constituting 'A Rake's Progress', 'A Harlot's Progress' etc. is discussed in detail in the Catalogue of the major Tate Britain exhibition *Hogarth*, Tate (2006). (Exhib. London Feb. – April 2007).

This artistic inheritance – the dichotomy between High Art and contemporary genre, and the influence of Hogarth on genre – shaped the development of Victorian art in the terms of engagement it set for much of the artistic debate and art criticism in Victorian times, and certainly in relation to the 'social-realists', whose works were either condemned or approved at least implicitly in accordance with the Reynolds or Hogarthian criteria.

But artists also exist in a particular social and professional context, and the RA was the focus of a slow but ultimately very successful rise in the social status of artists through the Victorian period. Discussing this, Gillett says: 'Reynolds had succeeded in replacing the figure of the artisan- painter – whether coach painter, sign painter, hand-and-drapery painter, as they were known at the start of his career – with the figure of the *artist*'. But status was not a matter merely of professional standing, but of recognition as a gentleman; and a major requirement for this was the income to live like a gentleman. Two factors changed the situation in this respect. Firstly, the increased scope which became available for work in book and magazine illustration, particularly from mid-century, which gave artists at the outset of their careers, the opportunity to achieve a measure of security; and secondly, the very steep rise in demand for art works, from the same period, and the consequent rise in the prices obtainable[7].

Turning to the art actually produced in the Victorian era, Graham Reynolds, considering 'The Predominance of Genre'[8], refers to the International Exhibition of 1855 in Paris, which had

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[7] Gillett P, *The Victorian Painter's World*, Alan Sutton (1990) pp 24 – 26.

A further requirement for a 'gentleman' was of course an education, preferably classical, the lack of which in many artists exercised the 1863 Royal Commission on the Royal Academy, if only from the viewpoint that such education was necessary for the production of history painting. It may be noted, also, that Fildes, Herkomer and Holl possessed little formal general education.

[8] Reynolds G, *Victorian Painting*, Herbert Press, 1987 (1st pub. 1966) p 94.

an English contribution large enough to be judged for its national characteristics in comparison with Continental paintings. He quotes Baudelaire as specifying as a salient feature of British art its 'intimate glimpses of home' and adds that this reinforced the contemporary comment made by Richard Redgrave:

> To pass from the grand salons appropriated in the Palais des Beaux Arts to French and Continental works, into the long gallery of British pictures, was to pass at once from the midst of warfare and its incidents, from passion, strife and bloodshed, from martyrdoms and suffering, to the peaceful scenes of home'.

It seems there was perceived to be an 'Englishness' to English art, which did not strive for the heroic. What it did very typically do was to tell a story, thus following the precept Hogarth set for himself: 'I have endeavoured to treat my subjects as a dramatic writer; my picture is my stage, and men and women my players, who by means of certain actions and gestures, are to exhibit a *dumb show*'[9] [his emphasis]. Within this flow of Victorian narrative painting, Treuherz, as already indicated, detects 'a sub-stream of paintings not just depicting the poor, but depicting them in the light of social problems'.[10] A brief survey follows of some key examples within this category, with an assessment of the extent to which they may be considered 'social-realist'.

It may be noted at the outset that changes of artistic influence and style occurred over time, which also affected the 'sub-stream'. At mid-century, the young Pre-Raphaelites, in opposition to the Academy, sought to establish a purer form of art they associated with Italian art of the period before Raphael, based on close observation of nature and sincerity of feeling. Typically, their paintings were meticulously detailed and of a high-keyed, jewel-like surface. At the nucleus of this group were William Holman Hunt, John Everett Millais and

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[9] Quoted in Murray P and L, *A Dictionary of Art and Artists*, Penguin 4th ed. 1976.

[10] Treuherz J. op.cit. p 9

Dante Gabriel Rossetti, then students at the RA. Rossetti gave them the title 'Brotherhood'.[11] The Pre-Raphaelites are now associated largely with romantic medievalism and (at least in Rossetti's case), with celebrations of red-haired women, but they did also produce paintings on contemporary subjects (see below).

Later in the century, a strain of French rustic naturalism, in particular that of Jules Bastien-Lepage influenced a significant group of English artists, many of whom had trained in France or in Antwerp. Some twenty of these settled in Newlyn in 1884, to continue painting rural subjects *en plein air*. In 1886, the leader of this Newlyn School, Stanhope Forbes, was a founder member of the New English Art Club (NEAC), a group of some fifty English artists looking to France for inspiration, who wished to provide opportunities for non-members of the Academy to exhibit their work. George Clausen, Henry La Thangue, Frederick Brown and Thomas Kennington were prominent members. In 1889, however, the NEAC came under the control of a minority group led by Walter Sickert, who looked to Degas and Monet rather than to Bastien Lepage, an event demonstrating the growing influence of a new avant-garde. But the paintings of Stanhope Forbes, Clausen and La Thangue, among others, remain important examples of late Victorian realism, recording the lives of ordinary field workers and fishermen.

Beneath these changing artistic influences, which did not affect all artists, a relatively few general motifs predominate in the subject matter of social concern – the foundling, the fallen woman, the death of a child or breadwinner, hard work and emigration or the pathos of old age.

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[11] The naming of a 'Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood' (PRB) is also of interest for present purposes in that it exemplifies an art 'movement' of a kind which the later Victorian social-realists – Fildes, Herkomer and Holl – were certainly not, that is, a deliberate grouping of the like-minded to proselytize a new kind of art, with a programme or manifesto to go with it. (The PRB also published a short-lived journal, the *Gem*).

Edward Matthew Ward's painting, *Hogarth's studio in 1739 – Holiday Visit of the Foundlings to view the Portrait of Captain Coram* (1863), links Victorian interest in Hogarth with a continuing Victorian problem, through Hogarth's and Coram's patronage of the Foundling Hospital in London. (figs.4 and 5). The scene is entirely a happy one, and two other paintings of mid-century, *The Foundling*, by the Irish painter George Bernard O'Neill (1852), and Emma Brownlow's *The Foundling Restored to its Mother* (1858), though also drawing attention to the foundling problem, are quite up-beat in mood (figs.6 and 7).

The realities will usually have been different. O'Neill's painting shows a benign Board of Guardians deciding on a name for the foundling, who would normally be destined for the Workhouse School and a life of labour. Brownlow's painting shows a middle-class young woman, apparently the mother, but the situation is ambiguous – is she a 'fallen woman', and if so, could she have reclaimed respectability along with the child? Brownlow's father, however, was secretary of the Foundling Hospital, and she would naturally have wished to present a hopeful view of the Hospital's work.

The Mitherless Bairn (1855), by the Scottish painter Thomas Faed has a related subject – a homeless orphan is being taken into the home of a family of cottagers. The expressions and emotions of the characters are strongly conveyed, after the manner of Faed's Scottish predecessor David Wilkie, and the painting was a great success at the Academy. The painting has an air of pathos, but its message is essentially comforting. It alludes to a social problem, but is devoid of social criticism (fig.8).

The 'fallen woman' seems also to have been a popular subject in the 1850s. A particularly dramatic example is Richard Redgrave's *The Outcast* (1851), in which the father is shown in

the act of expelling his daughter with her illegitimate baby into the snowy night, while another daughter pleads for mercy on her behalf (fig.9). Redgrave was an establishment figure of the older generation, an RA and associate of Henry Cole in the School of Design, and from 1857 Inspector-General of Art. Nonetheless, he specialized in paintings of women as victims, and his sympathies would certainly have been with the outcast here.

Paintings by Pre-Raphaelites or their allies of this subject seem higher in moralizing content. Holman Hunt's *The Awakening Conscience* (1853-4) is a prime example (fig.10). It shows the moment when the 'kept woman', in affluent surroundings with her lover, has qualms of conscience about her life. The painting is both Hogarthian and Pre-Raphaelite. It is crowded with symbolic and moralistic references, and painted in typical Pre-Raphaelite detail and high key. Holman Hunt was himself highly religious, and it seems likely he intended the painting to be construed mainly in terms of the woman's possible redemption. Rossetti attempted this theme in *Found* (fig.11), 'found' implying 'in a fallen state', on which he worked between 1854 and 1882, and Roddam Spencer Stanhope painted *Thoughts of the Past* (fig.12), in a studio below Rossetti's in 1859. The female figure depicted is again a prostitute or kept woman, apparently recalling her innocent days. Meanwhile, Augustus Egg completed his triptych *Past and Present* in 1858 (fig.13). This is even more Hogarthian, in that it uses a series of paintings embellished with symbolism to tell the story of the adulterous wife, whose transgression leads to the ruin of the whole family. All these paintings allude to a social problem, perhaps with sympathy, and perhaps intending some comment on the social mores of the day, but they are not works of overt social criticism.

Numbers of paintings in the Victorian period deal with the position of the sempstress or needlewoman - the overworked and exploited toiler of the clothing trade, on which Henry

Mayhew reported for the *Morning Chronicle*[12]. Thomas Hood's poem, *Song of the Shirt,* which made an instant impression when it appeared in the Christmas 1843 edition of *Punch,* inspired Richard Redgrave's *The Sempstress,* (fig.14) which was exhibited at the Academy the following year[13]. The sempstress is alone in a garret, dawn is breaking as she sits with her work, and she raises her eyes upwards in an 'other-worldly' gaze. The painting is emblematic rather than realistic. Most needlewomen were employed in crowded workshops rather than at home, and there is no evidence that Redgrave ever visited one. But the painting addresses a real abuse, and it made a real impact. 'Together, Hood and Redgrave created a visual type which was to be frequently painted by others; they made the sempstress into the most commonly depicted social-realist subject in Victorian painting'[14] . Anna Blunden's painting (fig.15), *For only one short hour...*' (1854) takes for its title a quote from Hood's poem, and pictorially it is clearly based on Redgrave's painting.

Yet another female victim is the subject of G F Watts' painting *Found Drowned*, (c 1849-50) a stark image of a suicide drowned in the Thames (fig.16). It may have been based on an incident witnessed by Watts himself or alternatively on Hood's *The Bridge of Sighs*. The poem as it stands is about a female suicide and implies that she died in shame – that she was yet another 'fallen woman'. It appears, however, that the poem derives from an actual incident, in which a shirtmaker, unable to make a living, threw herself and child into the Regents Canal. Only the child died, and she was convicted of murder, the death sentence being commuted[15]. So this powerful painting, uncluttered with symbolism, may actually

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[12] Thompson E P and Yeo E ed. *TheUnknown Mayhew, Selections from the Morning Chronicle, 1849-50,* Penguin (1971), pp 137 – 216. Mayhew's work, and his reportage on the sempstresses, is discussed further in Appendix II.

[13] Redgrave put a quotation from *Song of the Shirt* in the catalogue. (Treuherz J. op.cit. p 24).

[14] Treuherz J, ibid. p 25-6

[15] Treuherz J, ibid. p 28

relate to the iniquities of the clothing trade. Yet as Mayhew discovered, sempstresses were frequently driven to prostitution.

Turning to the world of work, notice must be taken of Ford Madox Brown's painting, *Work,* fig.17 (1852 – 63), William Bell Scott's *Iron and Coal: The Industry of the Tyne,* fig.18 (1861), and Eyre Crowe's *The Dinner Hour, Wigan,* fig.19 (1874). A.N. Wilson calls *Work* 'one of Victorian art's most self-conscious efforts to make a social comment in paint'.[16] Executed in the Pre-Raphaelite manner, and employing much symbolism, it is a modern allegory. All classes of society are represented, with workers in heroic mode observed by Carlyle and F D Maurice, the Christian Socialist and co-founder of the Working Men's College, which is advertised in a poster on the wall. Both Maurice and Carlyle were highly critical of capitalist individualism, and the implied message of the painting is the need for understanding between classes and between workers by hand and brain. But the message is not conveyed through gloom and misery. The sunny day and air of cheerfulness present social criticism with a hopeful look and a hopeful message.

The painting by William Bell Scott is one of a cycle of eight murals (executed in oils) depicting the history of Northumberland for Sir Walter Trevelyan at Wallington House, Northumberland. The painting has come to be regarded as one of the best of the (relatively few) presentations of factory work of the Industrial Revolution. The painting's celebratory intention is conveyed in its subtitle: *In the Nineteenth Century the Northumbrians Show the World What Can Be Done with Iron and Coal.* There is no social criticism here. Eyre Crowe's painting, unusual in depicting factory girls, is also upbeat in mood, but realist in treatment, without symbolism or apparent narrative intent.

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[16] Wilson A N, *The Victorians,* Arrow Books (2002), p 157.

While Ford Madox Brown was painting *Work*, two paintings (figs.21 and 22) depicting the lowest of all labour, the breaking of stones, were exhibited at the 1858 Academy: John Brett's *The Stonebreaker*, and Henry Wallis's *The Stonebreaker*. Both again were painted in the meticulous Pre-Raphaelite style, and both present a single labourer working in an idyllic rural landscape. In Brett's painting, it is a summer's day, the labourer is a sweet-faced youth, and there is nothing to suggest that this is the kind of heavy labour commonly performed by workhouse paupers. Wallis by contrast, presents an old and worn-out figure in a twilight glow, slumped in the moment of death. The frame of Wallis's painting was inscribed 'Now is done thy long day's work' from Tennyson's *A Dirge*, and the catalogue contained a quotation from Carlyle's *Sartor Resartus*: 'Hardly entreated Brother! For us was thy back so bent, for us were thy straight limbs and fingers so deformed... and thy body, like thy soul, was not to know freedom'.

Wallis's painting caused the stronger reaction. It was not approved by all, though Ruskin considered it the picture of the year.[17] But there can be no doubt that in the totality of words and painting, this is a work of social protest. Both paintings, however, must inevitably be compared with Courbet's much larger *The Stonebreakers* (1849), an iconic work of French Realism, which Wallis may have known (fig.20). Courbet's work will be noted further below.

George Clausen's *Winter Work* (1883-4) is of this kind (fig.23). It shows a group, again possibly a family, gathering mangolds in a dreary winter landscape. *A Fish Sale on a Cornish Beach* (1885) by Stanhope Forbes, the leader of the Newlyn School, has much more life and colourful activity (fig.24). Lambourne comments that Forbes's aim 'was to paint the

[17] Treuherz J, op.cit. p 36 - 38

history of the life of a fishing community. Under his direction, the mood of the works produced by Newlyn artists enjoyed a sea-change from gloom to affirmation [celebrating] not only the sorrows but also the joys of the fishing community'[18] On the other hand, a large painting by La Thangue, *The Last Furrow* (1895), returns to the theme of Wallis's *The Stonebreaker*, and can be 'read' in the same way. In *The Last Furrow*, an old ploughman has collapsed over his plough as his horse turns in the furrow. The horse turns to look, and seemingly understands (fig.25). The painting's size and rough handling are reminiscent of Courbet's *The Stonebreakers* which, Treuherz notes, La Thangue may have seen at the Paris Exposition of 1889[19].

Emigration is also a subject which seems prominent in Victorian painting, particularly in the early to mid-century. For many, emigration may well have been undertaken for positive reasons in search of greater opportunities, but many also will have found it more a dire necessity than an option, reflecting conditions of hardship and unemployment at home. Paintings on this subject typically show family partings, perhaps the most telling of which is Thomas Faed's *The Last of the Clan* (1865). Faed's painting relates to the Highland clearances, forcing the young and able-bodied abroad, leaving the old – the last of the clans – behind (fig.26). By far the most compelling painting on this subject, however, is Ford Madox Brown's *The Last of England* (1852-54), the man and wife close up to the picture plane, the man staring fixedly back at the receding shore of his native land (fig.27)[20]. Nonetheless, all

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[18] Lambourne L, *Victorian Painting*, Phaidon Press (1999) p 345

[19] Treuherz J, ibid, p 113-14.

[20] Brown's account of this painting, however, explains that the couple are middle-class in reduced circumstances, and that part of their tragedy is that they are forced to travel in a vessel 'all one class'.(Lambourne L, op.cit p 356). These comments of Brown's are also of interest in relation to the supposed message of his painting *Work*.

caught up in this great historic movement will have felt the pangs of it in their own ways, and all the paintings reflect that, coming very near to ‘social-realism’.

This survey of the ‘sub-stream of social concern’ will end with examples of paintings by two late Victorian artists associated with NEAC, Frederick Brown and Thomas Kennington. Brown’s *Hard Times* (fig.28) was shown at NEAC’s first exhibition in 1886, and may be regarded as a version of Herkomer’s *Hard Times* of 1885 (discussed further below), possibly influenced by Degas’s painting *L’Absinthe.* The seated figure in Brown’s painting has a dejected appearance, contrasting with the determination of the standing man gazing into the distance in Herkomer’s painting. But if Herkomer’s painting is to be regarded as ‘social-realism’ so also must Brown’s. The same consideration applies in the case of Kennington’s *Widowed and Fatherless* of 1888 (fig.29). To the extent that any number of Holl’s paintings are ‘social realism’, so too must be this one of Kennington’s.

Many other paintings could be brought into consideration in this survey, but it is suggested that of those presented here, a sufficient number deal with social problems and show ‘concern’ about them, to establish the proposition that something of the nature of a ‘sub-stream’ did exist throughout the Victorian era. The ‘social-realist’ paintings of Luke Fildes, Hubert Herkomer and Frank Holl will nonetheless need to be considered before deciding whether that group should be extended to include other painters.

Figure 1. Reynolds, Sir Joshua, *Mrs Siddons as the Tragic Muse*, Dulwich Picture Gallery, London.

? 1784 or 1789.

Available at: http://www.dulwichpicturegallery.org.uk

Fig. 2. Hogarth, William, *A Harlot's Progress*, Plate 3, 1732

Fig. 3. Hogarth, William, *A Rake's Progress*, Scene 3, 1734.

Figure 4. Ward, Edward Matthew, *Hogarth's studio in 1739 – Holiday Visit of the Foundlings to View the Portrait of Captain Coram*. York City Art Gallery, 1863.

Available at: http://www.yorkartgallery.org.uk

Figure 5. Hogarth, William, *Captain Thomas Coram*, Foundling Museum, London, 1740.

Available at: http://www.foundlingmuseum.org.uk

Figure 6. O'Neill, George Bernard, *The Foundling*, Tate Gallery, London, 1852.

Available at: http://www.tate.org.uk

Figure7. Brownlow, Emma, *The Foundling Restored to its Mother – an Incident in the Foundling Hospital*, The Coram Foundation, London, 1858.

Available at: http://www.foundlingmuseum.org.uk

Figure 8. Faed, Thomas, *The Mitherless Bairn*, Royal Pavilion Art Gallery, Brighton, 1855.

Available at: http://www.bridgemanart.com

Figure 9. Redgrave, Richard, *The Outcast*, Royal Academy, London, 1851.

Available at: http://www.royalacademy.org.uk

Figure 10. Hunt, William Holman, *The Awakening Conscience*, Tate Gallery, London, 1853-4.

Available at: http://www.tate.org.uk

Figure 11. Rossetti, Dante Gabriel, *Found*, Delaware Art Museum, 1854-82.

Available at: http://www.bridgemanart.com

Figure 12. Stanhope, John Roddam Spencer, *Thoughts of the Past*, Tate Gallery, London, 1859.

Available at: http://www.tate.org.uk

Figure 13. Egg, Augustus, *Past and Present* (three paintings), Tate Gallery, London, 1858.

Available at: http://www.tate.org.uk

Figure 14. Redgrave, Richard, *The Sempstress*, Forbes Magazine Collection, New York, 1846.

Available at: http://www.bridgemanart.com

Figure 15. Blunden, Anna, *For Only One Short Hour*, Yale Center for British Art, 1854.

Available at: http://www.bridgemanart.com

Figure 16. Watts, G.F, *Found and Drowned*, Watts Gallery, Compton, c1849-50.

Available at: http://www.bridgemanart.com

Figure 17. Brown, Ford Maddox, *Work*, Manchester City Art Galleries, 1852-63.

Available at: http://www.manchestergalleries.org

Figure 18. Scott, William Bell, *Iron and Coal: The Industry of the Tyne*, Wallington House, Northumberland, 1861.

Available at: http://www.bridgemanart.com

Figure 19. Crowe, Eyre, *The Dinner Hour, Wigan*, Manchester City Art Gallery, 1874.

Available at: http://www.bridgemanart.com

Figure 20. Courbet, Gustave, *The Stonebreakers*, (believed to have been destroyed in WWII, formerly Gemäldegalerie, Dresden), 1849.

Reproduced from: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Gustave_Courbet_018.jpg

Image is in the public domain

Figure 21. Brett, John, *The Stonebreaker*, Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool, 1857-1858.

Available at: http://www.liverpoolmuseum.org.uk/walker

Figure 22. Wallis, Henry, *The Stonebreaker*, Birmingham City Museum and Art Gallery, 1857.

Available at: http://www.bridgemanart.com

Figure 23. Clausen , Claude, *Winter Work*, Tate Gallery, London, 1883-1884.

Available at: http://www.tate.org.uk

Figure 24. Forbes, Stanhope, *A Fish Sale on a Cornish Beach*, City Art Gallery, Plymouth, 1885.

Figure 25. La Thangue, H.H, *The Last Furrow*, Old Art Gallery, 1895.

Available at: http://www.bridgemanart.com

Figure 26. Faed Thomas, *The Last of the Clan*, Glasgow Art Gallery and Museum, 1865.

Available at: http://www.bridgemanart.com

Figure 27. Brown, Ford Maddox, *The Last of England*, Birmingham City Art Gallery, 1852-1854.

Available at: http://www.bridgemanart.com

Figure 28. Brown, Frederick, *Hard Times*, Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool, 1886.

Figure 29. Kennington, Thomas B. *Widowed and Fatherless*, Private Collection, 1888.

Available at: http://www.bridgemanart.com

CHAPTER 2 WILLIAM LUSON THOMAS AND THE *GRAPHIC*

As indicated in the Introduction, Fildes, Herkomer and Holl are commonly grouped together through the similarity of their careers, particularly in that they all emerged partly or mainly through their drawings for the *Graphic.* The *Graphic* itself epitomised an important cultural phenomenon of the age – a new kind of pictorial journalism, the 'making' of which is discussed in further detail in Appendix 1. But if it was the *Graphic* which made the 'social-realist' painters, it was William Luson Thomas who, in every sense, made the *Graphic.* In considering the painters, it is therefore necessary to consider Thomas, his aims and ambitions for the paper, and his influence on the artists and engravers he employed[21].

Thomas was the son of a London shipbroker. At the age of sixteen he went to Paris to join his elder brother George, who had set up an engraving business with his brother-in-law. William also became an engraver, making his reputation as assistant to W J Linton. Thereafter, he established his own successful business with a large staff, illustrating many books and periodicals, including much work for the *Illustrated London News (ILN).*

By the late 1860s, therefore, Thomas was not only an eminent engraver, but a successful entrepreneur with a wide knowledge of the art and publishing worlds. Writing in 1888 on 'The Making of the *Graphic'* in Harry Quilter's *Universal Review*, Thomas says:

> I was ready, I think I was prepared, [in 1869] for some big, interesting, far-reaching enterprise. And it was in this temper ...that I conceived the idea of, and founded, the *Graphic*...The origin of the scheme consisted in establishing a weekly illustrated journal open to all artists, whatever their method, instead of confining my staff to draughtsmen on wood as had hitherto been the general custom. Added to this, as an attraction, I hoped to enlist the services of writers of some literary distinction.

[21] The earlier development of Victorian pictorial journalism is dealt with in Appendix I.

It is interesting that Thomas adds, 'I think, at this time no country was more fortunate than England in her school of young draughtsmen and painters'. He goes on to list seventeen by name and says these are only a few. (See also fig. 30). In a further key passage, Thomas says: 'It was this artistic truth, this swift and imaginative and convincing rendering of the appearance of things, which these men revealed to the public eye'[22].

Thomas seems not to have elaborated on these comments elsewhere, but in follow-up to the highly respectful obituaries which appeared on his death in 1900[23], Hubert Herkomer and Harry Quilter both wrote to *The Times*. Herkomer wrote:

> more than improve illustrated journalism, he [Thomas] influenced English art, and that in the wholesomest way. It is not too much to say that there was a visible change in the selection of subjects by painters in England after the advent of the Graphic. Mr Thomas opened its pages to every phase of the story of our life; he led the young rising artist into drawing subjects that might never have otherwise arrested his attention; he only asked that they be subjects of universal interest and of artistic value...[24].

Harry Quilter wrote with equal warmth, highlighting the moral aspect of his editing: of 'the care he exercised from the very first to keep every suspicion of indecency, vulgarity, of sensation out of the *Graphic* pages, alike in the drawings and the accompanying literature'[25].

It will be noted that while Herkomer emphasises the influence for change which Thomas and the *Graphic* exercised, Quilter's support comes from the conservative end of the spectrum in

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[22] Thomas W L, 'The Making of the *Graphic*' in *Universal Review* No. 5, 15.9.1888. Thomas names Walker, Pinnell, Hill, Linton, Gregory, Fildes, Herkomer, Macbeth, Sidney Hall, Small, H B Houghton, Charles Green, J Nash, G Durand, H Woods, Miss Paterson (Mrs Allingham) and Miss Thompson (now Lady Butler). Thomas's comment contrasts with Mason Jackson's view in 1892 (referred to earlier) that there was a great want of good artists in the sixties. Perhaps it was simply that the ILN could not recognise or attract them, whereas Thomas could.

[23] Most obituaries paid tribute, *inter alia*, to Thomas's wide-ranging philanthropical work.

[24] *The Times*, October 19th 1900.

[25] *The Times* October 20th 1900

Victorian art criticism[26]. These views can, however be reconciled if it is realized that Thomas's ambitions for the *Graphic* were in the main professional - to establish a periodical of high artistic and journalistic quality, which could compete directly with the *ILN* on its own territory[27].

Mason Jackson, looking back from 1892 at his experience with the *ILN* says: 'Nothing attracts the multitude like *news*. Let the Queen or the Prince of Wales perform some great public function, which is promptly and fully illustrated in the Pictorial Press.... Let there be a great storm, a disastrous fire... and the sale of the illustrated newspaper leaps up by thousands'[28].

Thomas and his editors could not ignore this demand, and did not, as a general survey of the *Graphic* over the years quite clearly demonstrates. It can also be argued that Thomas's insistence on 'this artistic truth, this swift and imaginative and convincing rendering of the appearance of things' owed much more to his ambition for high quality *reportage* than to any form of social-realist ideology or specifically radical agenda. Nonetheless, the effect of his influence on illustration was certainly in the direction of a realism of style.

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[26] Quilter was owner of the short-lived *Universal Review*, and a long-time friend of Thomas. The *ODNB* says of Quilter, 'He was a conservative art critic whose views reflected those of the 'philistine'. He opposed avant-garde movements [and] was an enemy of James McNeill Whistler, siding in the press with John Ruskin during the famous Ruskin versus Whistler trial of 1878....Quilter's criticism, along with Whistler's rebuttal, appeared in the artist's book, *The Gentle Art of Making Enemies*, in 1890'.

[27] When George Thomas died in 1868, William produced a memorial volume of his work, containing many of his best drawings, but none from the *ILN*, which refused to lend the woodblocks, 'a decision which both angered William and strengthened his resolution to set up an illustrated newspaper in opposition to the weekly, which had hitherto held off all rivals' (*ODNB*).

[28] Mason Jackson, (former Head of the *ILN* Art Department), *Thirty Years of Pictorial Journalism*, *ILN*, 14.5.1892.

Thomas, in any event, was a man with a 'hinterland' in the arts[29], and the quality of both the art work and the literary content of the *Graphic* was important to him. Some indication of the wide esteem he achieved, personally and for the *Graphic*, may be gained from a report in the *ILN* dated 13th December 1890, of a dinner given to Thomas to mark the twenty-first anniversary of the paper. Among the three hundred guests at table were Professor Herkomer, RA, Chairman, Mr Luke Fildes RA, Sir James Linton, Thomas Hardy, Walter Besant and many other notables[30]. The toast, significantly, was 'To Art'. Proposing this, Herkomer bore 'personal testimony to the encouragement which many artists have received from Mr Thomas's manner in dealing with them'[31]. Fildes's son, L V Fildes, in his biography of his father[32], records Fildes's reply to the toast, as follows:

> My father took as his theme the influence of the Art of the Illustrator upon the Art of the Painter in this country. "Should the time come...when our younger artists neglect the study that would qualify them to excel as Designers and Illustrators, it will not be a good day for English Art". Illustration, he went on, was a Branch of Art singularly and peculiarly English in which our supremacy was unquestioned from Hogarth, "the great Father of the English Illustrators" down to the present time... he continued: "It may be said, scoffingly, that the Art of the Illustrator is but the Art of the Multitude. Be it so! But he who by earnest and sincere efforts arrests, stirs, or gives pleasure to the many does good work, perhaps great work"

This is a revealing expression of confidence in the status of English illustration, to which, by implication, the *Graphic* is deemed to have contributed[33]. However, in 'It may be said,

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[29] Thomas was a considerable water-colourist, as well as a foremost engraver. He became an associate of the Institute of Painters in Watercolours in 1864, a full member of the Institute in 1875, and an RI when it achieved royal status in 1884 (*ODNB).*

[30] Frank Holl had died in 1888, aged 43.

[31] *ILN*, 13 December 1890, p 743.

[32] Fildes L V, *Luke Fildes, RA.- A Victorian Painter*, Michael Joseph (1968), p 120.

[33] The passage is revealing in other respects: of Fildes's view of Hogarth and 'the Multitude' and of Fildes's own essential insularity, despite his travels abroad and his 'Venetian periods' – an attitude Hogarth would have shared.

scoffingly,...' etc, Fildes may be referring to an attack by John Ruskin fifteen years earlier, which Fildes is unlikely to have forgotten. In his *Academy Notes* of 1875, Ruskin said:

> The Royal Academy of England, in its annual publication, is nothing more than a large coloured *Illustrated Times* folded in saloons, - the splendidest May number of the *Graphic*, shall we call it? That is to say, it is a certain quantity of pleasant, but imperfect, "illustration" of passing events, mixed with as much gossip of the past, and tattle of the future, as may be probably be agreeable to a populace supremely ignorant of the one, and reckless of the other.

The passage occurs as part of an argument – a main theme of Ruskin's social criticism – equating Victorian art producers and reproducers with industrialization in all its aspects – speedy manufacture, division of labour, the creation and supply of mass markets – all with pernicious effects. Moreover, Ruskin specifically attacks wood engraving, claiming that, compared with metal, the "coarseness" of wood yields "ruder and more elementary work, which appeals to "blunter minds".[34] It is ironic that, in this scenario, the *Graphic* should find itself depicted, not as a progressive force, but as part of the new and reprehensible *status quo*, and the object of social criticism, albeit of a backward-looking kind. But by 1890, at the time of the *Graphic's* celebration (and in the year the illustrated *Daily Graphic* began) Ruskin had retreated into madness, and the *Graphic* itself had seen its best days.

A number of illustrations of working-class life from the *Graphic's* 'best days', by artists other than Fildes, Herkomer and Holl, are shown at figs.31, 32, 33 and 34.

[34] Quotations from Garrigan K O,' "The Splendidest May number of the Graphic": John Ruskin and the Royal Academy Exhibition of 1875', in *Victorian Periodical Review*, Spring 1991 pp 22-33.

Fig.30. Wirgman T. Blake, The *"Graphic" Artists*, Magazine of Art, 1890. A Group Portrait of ten of the *Graphic's* artist-illustrators. Standing, left to right: Charles Green, Sydney P. Hall, E.J. Gregory, A.R.A., H. Woods, A.R.A., Luke Fildes, R.A.,.J. Nash; seated: Hubert Herkomer, R.A., G. Durand, Frank Holl R.A., and W. Small.

Fig.31. Staniland C.J, *The Two Widows*, 31.7.1880, *Graphic*.

Fig.32. Buckman E, *People Waiting for Ration Tickets in Paris*, 19.11.1870, *Graphic*.

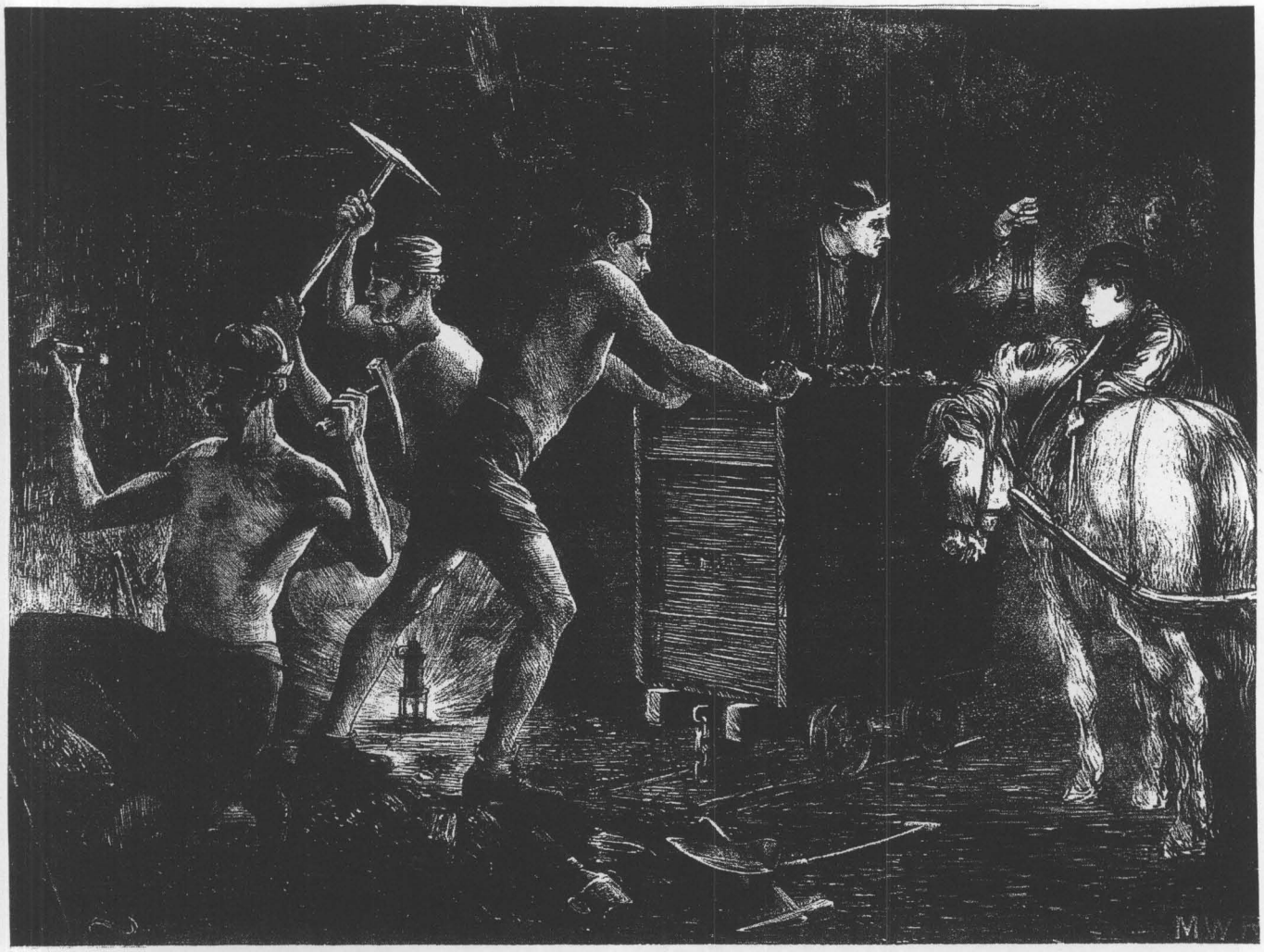

Fig.33. Ridley, M.W. *Pitmen Hewing the Coal,* 28.1.1871, *Graphic*.

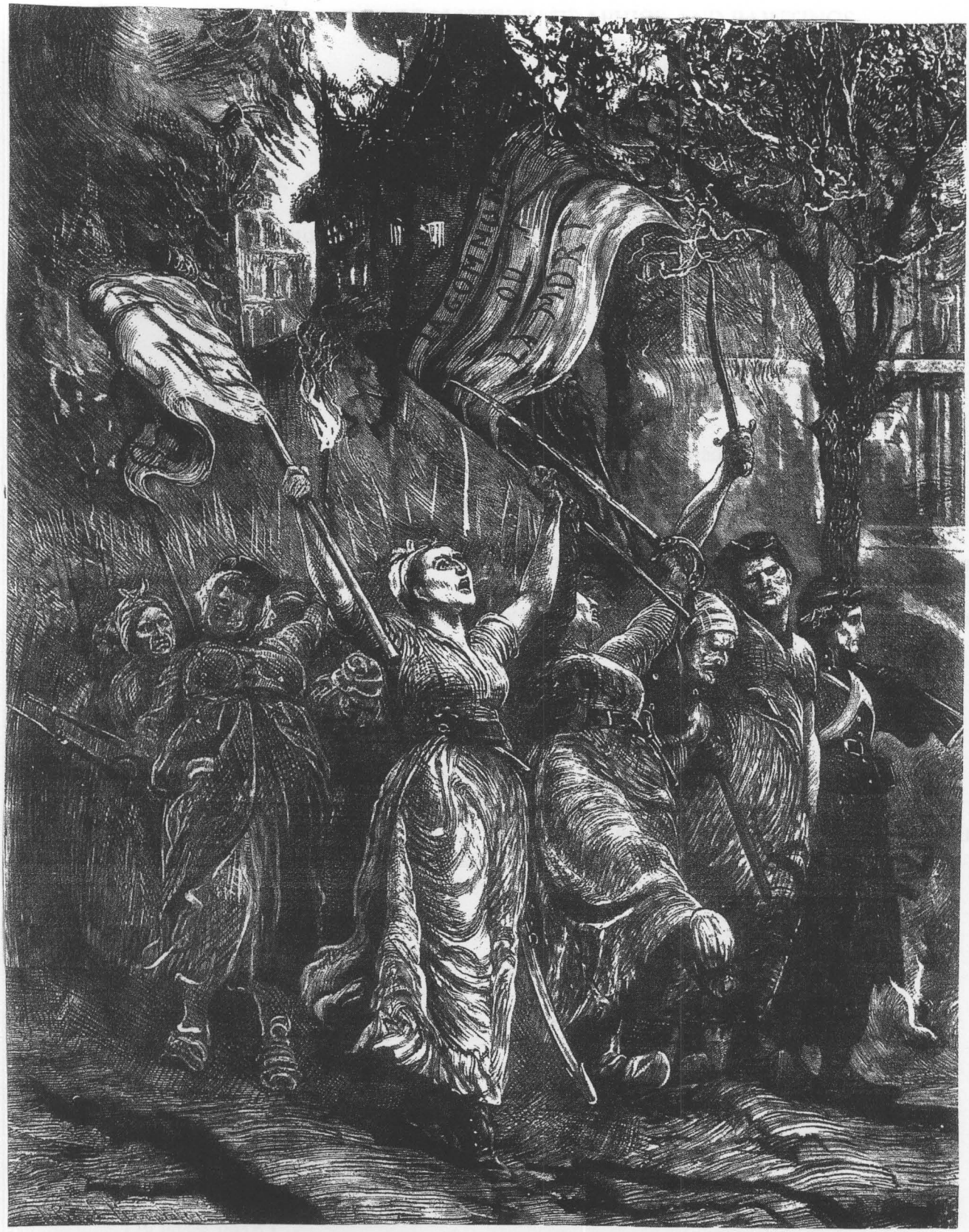

Fig.34. Houghton A.Boyd, *The Commune or Death – Women of Montmartre*, 10.6.1871, *Graphic*.

CHAPTER 3 THE 'SOCIAL-REALISTS' IN GRAPHICS AND PAINTINGS

This chapter will consider in some detail the work of the three 'social-realists', Fildes, Herkomer and Holl, Additionally, to elucidate as far as possible the personal motivations, career choices and attitudes to social questions of these three artists, biographical material will be introduced and discussed as necessary.

(Samuel) Luke Fildes (1843[35]-1927) was born in Liverpool, the fourth of ten children of James Fildes. James is said by Luke's son L V Fildes to have had 'some minor employment with the Port Authority at Liverpool after service in the Merchant Marine' At the age of eleven, in 1854, Luke 'was taken away from home by his grandmother to Chester for reasons he never comprehended and was adopted by her'[36]. L V Fildes adds later that his father 'had no proper childhood', but expands no further on that subject.[37] David Croal Thomson, in a monograph on Luke Fildes (1895) says:

> His [Luke's] forebears were of the middle-class stock which holds obedience to authority among its primary duties. As descendants of the Puritans they were strongly on the side of the Whigs and even of the Chartists, but notwithstanding their predilections for Radicalism, they were yet *bien bodies*, as the Scots say, a people with a certain property which they could hand on to their younger generations.[38]

James, however, had married into a Catholic family, and his children were baptized RCs, a factor which may have contributed to the decision by Luke's grandmother to adopt him.

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[35] Some accounts say 1844. L V Fildes comments on a 'blue plaque' put up at Fildes's house at 11 Melbury Road, Holland Park that, 'the years of my father's birth and of his taking up residence in the house are shown one year later than in fact they were', Fildes LV, op.cit. p 90.

[36] L V Fildes, ibid p 1

[37] L V Fildes ibid p 7.

[38] Thomson, D C, 'The Life and Work of Luke Fildes, RA', in *Art Annual 1895*, (Christmas Number of the *Art Journal*, pp 1 - 32)

This grandmother, Mary Fildes, certainly for her part shared the Fildes family's radical outlook. She was one of the demonstrators injured by the yeomanry at the 'Peterloo Massacre' in 1819, and though she soon distanced herself from Richard Carlile[39], she continued in radical activities for some time afterwards. Later, however, she moved to Chester, and it may be assumed that by that stage Mary was no longer active politically. Nor is there any evidence of any influence she may have had on Luke's outlook on political or social affairs[40].

What Luke does seem to have derived from Mary is a strong personality, and a desire to go his own way, and this he did. There was no family background in the arts, but Fildes showed early interest in drawing, and attended evening classes in art at the Chester Mechanics Institute from 1857 to 1860, becoming a pupil-teacher at the age of fifteen. He next determined to study at the Warrington School of Art, and overcoming Mary's initial opposition, he moved there in 1860. It was a propitious move. He met Henry Woods, who would become his life-long friend, brother-in-law and fellow RA, and in 1863 received advice which took him to London on a scholarship to the new National Art Training School in South Kensington. The one-year scholarship was extended to two, but the main purpose of the School was to provide training in industrial design, and Fildes had become convinced that he 'wanted to go in for book illustration'. L V Fildes says:

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[39] Mary was chairwoman of the Manchester Female Reform Society at the time of Peterloo. An account of her involvement in that and subsequent events is given in Bush M, 'Richard Carlile and the Female Reformers of Manchester:', in *Manchester Region History Review*, MMU, Vol 16, (2002-3), pp 2 - 12

[40] If Luke Fildes did indeed harbour radical views on political or social issues, almost no suggestion of them intrudes into his son's biography. The *ONDB* states that (later in his career) Luke accepted commissions for state portraits, of Edward VII etc, 'despite his republican beliefs', but if he did hold such beliefs, they would seem to run counter to the whole thrust of his career, which developed on model 'establishment' lines. As to what his political beliefs may have been, there is one small piece of indirect evidence, and one only, in the public domain. L V Fildes records an occasion when Henry Woods, Luke's life-long friend and brother-in-law refers to him as a 'Conservative'. (L V Fildes , ibid. p 176)

> The turning-point for him was his seeing some illustrations by Millais in *Cornhill* and *Once a Week*. With these drawings he [Millais] was making one of his excursions from painting into "black-and-white". The decade of the sixties, with the five years on either side, was a great period of English book illustration, and the services of "black-and-white" artists were in great demand by the engravers who supplied the publishers with wood-blocks. Such was the prestige of being one of the "Illustrators of the Sixties" that men of mark as painters, Millais for example, took an occasional hand at it with the men who were "black-and-white" specialists[41]

On expiry of his scholarship in 1865, Fildes studied at the Royal Academy Schools (1865/6). The tuition was free, but he needed work. It was then, in 1866, that he obtained an introduction to W L Thomas, who was evidently impressed by Fildes, and offered him work. Gradually, Fildes became known, and was offered work by other engravers, notably Swain, and his work began to appear in periodicals such as *Once a Week*, *Good Words* and *Cassell's Magazine*[42].

When Thomas's *Graphic* was launched on 4th December 1869, it carried Fildes's *Houseless and Hungry* in the place of honour (fig.35). That summer, Thomas had asked Fildes – the first artist he had spoken to on the subject - to 'draw something for him more important than he had ever drawn before, and he could have the choosing of his own subject'. What is of interest here is how, or why, Fildes chose that subject. The accounts by Fildes himself in interviews with How[43] and Thomson[44] in the 1890s, and by L V Fildes in 1968 [45] are essentially the same. On being given this apparently *carte blanche* commission, Fildes went home (at this time it was summer), and recalled (or his notebook recalled to him) a snowy winter's night outside a police station, with a queue of outcasts miserably huddled in driving

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[41] L V Fildes, ibid, pp 7-8

[42] L V Fildes, ibid, pp 10 – 11

[43] How H, 'Illustrated Interviews. XXV, Mr Luke Fildes, RA', in *The Strand Magazine*, July 1893, pp 119-20

[44] Thomson, D C, op.cit. p 26

[45] F V Fildes, ibid, p 12

sleet, waiting for tickets of admission to a Casual Ward. He decided immediately on this as his subject, and sketched out the initial design that evening.

There is no reason to doubt that Fildes did see a queue of this kind while wandering the streets in his early days in London He may also have seen and recalled the illustration of this subject in the *Illustrated Times* (see also page 28 and fig.100 in Appendix I). Alternatively, it may be conjectured that Thomas could have given some clue or suggestion as to the kind of illustration which might serve for the vital first edition of the *Graphic*. Myers suggests that Thomas (rather than Fildes) is likely to have been familiar with Henry Mayhew's description of a Casual Ward queue in his *London Labour and the London Poor,*[46] or Augustus Mayhew's novel of 1858, *Paved with Gold,* which uses much of the same description *verbatim.* Myers quotes this text from *Paved with Gold,* noting that Mayhew's description would be apt commentary on Fildes's subject:

> There they stand shivering in the snow, with their thin, cobwebby garments hanging in tatters about them....Many are without shirts, with the bare skin showing through the rents and gaps in their clothes...Some have their greasy coats and trousers tied round their wrists and ankles with string, to prevent the piercing wind from blowing up them... A few are without shoes; and these keep one foot only to the ground, while the bare flesh that has had to tramp through the snow is blue and livid-looking as half cooked meat [47]

But Fildes choice of this subject is perhaps more easily explained in terms of his apprenticeship to 'black-and-white' illustration. As he put it, 'I did all sorts of work. I selected my own subjects, and they were written up to, making a specialty of London street

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[46] Neuburg V (ed), Mayhew H, *London Labour and the London Poor*, Penguin (1985) pp 441. Henry's account is accompanied by an illustration of an Asylum for the Houseless Poor, Cripplegate.

[47] Myers B, 'Studies for Houseless and Hungry and the Casual Ward by Luke Fildes, RA' in *Apollo Magazine*, July 1982, pp 36 – 43

life - "The Street Juggler", "The Street Doctor", and things of that kind'[48]. Fildes was a young artist in search of subjects, and the queue at a Casual Ward could well have occurred to him naturally, as an obvious subject within the great compass of 'London street life'[49].

But this subject was not quite like any other. Fildes refers to the 'terrible pathos'[50] of the scene he witnessed, and may well have been moved by it in common humanity. Certainly, the image in the *Graphic* made a powerful, immediate impression, not least on Millais, who took it to Charles Dickens, who was looking for a new illustrator for his next novel. Fildes's commission to illustrate Dickens's *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* soon followed. Dickens had always paid great attention to the illustrations for his novels, and this was a prestige commission, establishing Fildes's reputation[51]. But how should we view *Houseless and Hungry* now? Fox for her part rates it poorly, comparing it very unfavourably with the image in the *Illustrated Times* (fig.100):

> Compare...Luke Fildes's famous *Houseless and Hungry*...with Matt Morgan's illustration of the same scene three years previously in the *Illustrated Times*. Morgan's work is comparatively free of the painterly sentimentality which pervades the lurking shadows and picturesque, swathed stances of the figures and their garments in the *Graphic* picture[52].

Certainly, it would be difficult to detect sentimentality lurking in the shadows of Morgan's drawing. It depicts a band of thuggish-looking desperadoes, more likely to engender alarm than sympathy. Yet the text which accompanies this image is an impassioned plea on behalf of the poor and desperate. It ends:

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[48] How H, op.cit. p119

[49] Herkomer also states in his memoirs that he was *required* to find his own subjects for the *Graphic* (see below). This clearly adds credence to Fildes's story that *he* found the subject of *Houseless and Hungry*.

[50] Thomson D C, op.cit. p 26

[51] See also Q D Leavis, 'The Dickens Illustrations: Their Function' on Fildes and Dickens, in *Dickens the Novelist*, Pelican (1972), pp 478-9

[52] Fox C, op.cit. p 573

> if they have not died before the slowly-creeping dawn comes shuddering up from the river, on which they have gazed so desperately from one of the bridges, they may "complain to his Worship", and he may perhaps enforce the law twenty-four hours too late, and when the infirmary has to be opened instead of the casual ward.

This mismatch between image and text may be said to occur also in the case of the *Graphic*. Whether or not Fildes's image should be deemed guilty of sentimentality, it seems likely to have been truer, or more representative of the situation than Morgan's in an important respect – it depicts the destitute of all ages and both sexes. Perhaps this brings forth a different reaction. But the accompanying text in the *Graphic* ('written up to' the illustration, as Fildes put it) is more upbeat:

> ...Mr Charles Villiers, when President of the Poor Law Board brought forward the measure known as the Houseless Poor Act... Before it became law, they would have slept on the strip of pavement by the workhouse of St Martin-in-the-Fields...As it is, they present themselves at a police station and ask for a ticket...This is always given them... for the fundamental principle of the Houseless Poor Act is, that the destitute shall not spend their nights in the streets, and its provisions are no longer evaded as they were when it first passed into law...[53]

The piece goes on to ascribe (presumably fictional) histories and characters to the various figures depicted, claiming them to be 'portraits of real people'. The tone adopted is 'worldly-wise' rather than sympathetic or unsympathetic – some of these people, it seems, deserve to be where they are, others not, but the State is doing what it can. The social protest in the *Illustrated Times* is quite absent from the *Graphic*, due possibly, at least in part, to some improvement in the enforcement of the new Act in the interval between the appearance of the two accounts. But the condition of the casual poor remained fundamentally unchanged, as described in Blanchard Jerrold's *London Pilgrimage* of 1872, in which Doré illustrates yet another 'applicants' scene[54] And such queues were still there at the end of the century, as Jack London attests, in his *The People of the Abyss* (1903).

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[53] Text accompanying Fildes's *Houseless and Hungry*, the *Graphic*, 4. 12.1869.

[54] Illustrated at p.214 of Anthem Press, London, ed. (2006).

Meanwhile, Dickens's *Drood* was to be serialized in twelve parts from April 1870 with two illustrations in each number. In the event, Dickens died in June with the book half finished. But Fildes had completed twelve drawings, and had reached the summit as a black-and-white artist[55]. After Dickens's death, Fildes drew Dickens's *Empty Chair* (fig.72) at Gad's Hill, and the drawing was published in the Christmas 1870 number of the *Graphic*. Thousands of prints were sold. Fildes also produced a watercolour of this subject, exhibited at the RA in 1871, and a watercolour of Dickens's grave in Poet's Corner, for Forster's *Life of Dickens* [56].

By early in 1871, however, Fildes had taken a studio – not needed as a black-and-white artist – and he was 'as he neared the age of twenty-eight, turning to be a painter, and but for a few short returns in later years, his career as a black-and-white artist was at an end'[57]. Fildes did not entirely desert the *Graphic*, but almost all his further work for that paper was in the illustration of serials. In the early seventies, he provided illustrations for Wilkie Collins's *Miss or Mrs?* Christmas 1871 (fig.36), Charles Reade's *The Wandering Heir* (Christmas 1872), and Victor Hugo's *Ninety-Three*, 28th February 1874, (fig.37) and he returned later to serial illustration with thirty large drawings for the *Graphic's* serialization of Amelia Edwardes's *Lord Brackenbury* (February-September 1880), the largest commission for black-and-white work he ever received. These drawings have no social-realist content, but are significant for their intensely dramatic, realist style. Of his other drawings for the *Graphic*, not one could be considered a 'social-realist' subject, for example: *One Touch of Nature Makes the Whole World Kin* 22nd April 1871), *The Bashful Model* (8th November

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[55] By this time, a method of photographing a drawing onto the wood-block had been invented, which meant that the original drawing could be preserved. Fildes used this method for the *Drood* drawings, and consequently was able to sell them separately.

[56] L V Fildes, op.cit p 16

[57] L V Fildes, ibid p 17.

1873)[58] and *Fair Quiet and Sweet Rest* (27th June 1874 – based on Fildes's first, and successful, Academy painting, shown in 1872)[59].

Beyond this black-and-white work, Fildes's long career was that of a painter exhibiting at the RA, rising in seniority from ARA in 1879 to RA in 1887. He would later receive a knighthood. In the period up to 1887, his work alternated between English and Venetian genre subjects, with four paintings classified as 'social-realist' appearing at intervals between 1874 and 1883. But a portrait of his wife exhibited at the 1887 Academy 'put him at one bound, into the front rank of contemporary portrait painters'[60], and after this he devoted himself almost exclusively to portraiture.

The four 'social-realist' paintings, plus a fifth, exhibited at the RA in 1891, were: *Applicants for Admission to a Casual Ward* (1874), based on the *Graphic* illustration *Houseless and Hungry, The Widower* (1876), *Return of the Penitent* (1879), *The Village Wedding* (1883) and *The Doctor* (1891). Of these, the *Casual Ward* is by far the most important in establishing Fildes as a social-realist, and indeed an important part of the case for the existence of a social-realist phase in Victorian art rests on this painting. The classification 'social-realist' for the others will be challenged in what follows.

With his debut success with *Fair,Quiet and Sweet Rest* in 1872, Fildes was 'becoming established in the Higher Bohemianism', moving in the society of figures like George Sala, the leading journalist of his time, and George du Maurier, artist and writer[61]. He exhibited

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[58] Admittedly, the 'bashful model' in this case is a reluctant prisoner being photographed by the police.

[59] Fildes's work for the *Graphic* is listed in a typescript by Paul Fildes in the National Art Library, V & A, London

[60] L V Fildes, ibid pp 107-8. .

[61] L V Fildes, ibid, p21

another genre subject in 1873, and was then ready for a major attempt to establish his reputation as a painter. In September 1873, he wrote to his grandmother in Chester:

> I am hard at work in London, and have been all the summer, on my big picture for next year's Royal Academy. I am anxious about its success. I want it to be one very much, as so much depends on it. It is a very important work, and like all things that are pretentious, if they are not very successful they have a corresponding failure. But I hope for the best.[62]

His subject was a re-working of *Houseless and Hungry*, to be called *Applicants for Admission to a Casual Ward* (fig.38). The painting would be physically large - 4½ f t high by 8 ft wide – and, like *Houseless,* would be crowded with figures. How, Thomson and L V Fildes all give circumstantial accounts of the genesis of this painting, particularly in regard to the means by which models were obtained, with in some cases details of their histories and personalities. The accounts do not altogether tally, but clearly, Fildes did work from detailed studies of models, and Myers concludes from an examination of figure studies still in existence, that at least some of those done for *Houseless* were re-used for *The Casuals,* four years later (fig.39) Myers considers it immaterial where Fildes got his models, but points out that he is likely to have chosen among the 'more respectable poor' with fixed abodes rather than from casuals at a police station[63].

There is a final note to be entered here concerning Fildes's association with Dickens. While he was working on this painting, Fildes had occasion to meet John Forster, who was writing Dickens's biography. Presumably with *Houseless and Hungry* in mind, Forster produced a letter from Dickens alluding to a very similar scene he had witnessed in Whitechapel years earlier. Dickens had written: 'Dumb, wet, silent horrors! Sphinxes set up against the dead wall, and none likely to be at the pains of solving them until the *general overthrow'*. Fildes

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[62] L V Fildes, ibid p 24.

[63] Myers B, op.cit. pp 42

immediately asked if he could use this quote, and it duly appeared in the Academy catalogue when the picture came to be exhibited in 1874. What was meant by 'the general overthrow', probably neither Dickens nor Fildes really knew. Dickens was always hazy about remedies for social ills, but he was no revolutionary. The quote nonetheless underlines the sentiment of the painting, and it is noteworthy that Fildes had no hesitation in adopting it[64]. It may be added that Fildes uses'literary symbolism' of his own within the painting - posters on the walls offer various rewards, including £2 for a missing child and £20 for a missing dog.

In the event, the painting achieved all that Fildes could have hoped. 'Like Byron, [he] "awoke one morning and found himself famous". The appearance of *The Casuals* on the walls of the Academy gave rise to one of those legendary occurrences in the history of that Body when a barricade has to be erected round a picture and the police called in to help regulate the crowds'.[65]

Victorian press reaction to the picture is revealing – and not nearly as uniformly hostile as stereotypes of Victorian attitudes might lead one to expect. L V Fildes says:

> There was, as far as I know, but one dissident note in the Press – a peevish dismissal of the picture by the *Manchester Courier* on the ground that it was "disgusting". The *Daily Telegraph* gave more than a full column to *The Casuals* alone. It was variously hailed as "a great picture", "a truly wondrous performance", Fildes was "Hogarth's successor", a foreign critic saw him as "opening a new path in Art as Gustave Courbet had done in 1851 with his *Stone Breakers*".

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[64] Fenn W W, 'Our Living Artists, L Fildes ARA', *Magazine of Art*, Feb 1880, pp 49-52 The account of Dickens's Whitechapel experience duly appeared in Forster's *Life of Charles Dickens*, 3 vols (London 1969, first pub 1872-4), Vol. 2, p 131. He (Dickens) 'came upon what appeared to be seven heaps of rags' at the entrance to the Workhouse. He enquired of the Master, and discovered the casual ward was full, and there was no help. The rag heaps were all girls, and Dickens gave each a shilling. 'One girl "twenty or so", had been without food a day and a night. "Look at me" she said, as she clutched the shilling, and without thanks shuffled off'.

[65] L V Fildes, op.cit. pp 25-6

Treuherz also notes positive reactions, though rather more negative ones than Fildes's son allows. He quotes at greater length from the 'peevish' *Manchester Courier*, but adds:

> Others, though horrified, approved [the painting's] truthfulness even in this conflicted with their view of art. "This is the most notable piece of realism we have met with for a very long time...[though this] leaves unsettled the larger question of the subject's fitness for art at all" (Art Journal). But if it was artistically unacceptable, it has a different value; "not a few of us will see the miseries of their fellow beings for the first time in these personations. Morally and socially speaking, this is the picture of the year" (Athenaeum)[66]

But modern critics, as previously noted, have had their own severe reservations. Thomas says:

> If narrative paintings show contemporary subjects, it does not follow that they are a reflection of the way things really were. Their 'documentary' evidence is always problematic. Narrative pictures are primarily stories, not truths, and they aim for dramatic effect. This can be seen even in the social-realist paintings that emerged in the 1870s like Luke Fildes's *Applicants for Admission to a Casual Ward*. This picture might well have drawn on the actual plight of the poor (Fildes used real vagrants for his models, albeit doused in disinfectant) but it employs a heavy-handed realism that fails to be totally realistic precisely because it announces itself as such.[67]

Victorian and modern critics of course approach the painting from different ideological viewpoints – the Victorian typically from the viewpoint that art should strive to depict the ideal, not the real, and the modern now frequently from the viewpoint that all art production and communication is at least potentially false and manipulative[68]. Nonetheless it is clear that Fildes's painting provoked strong reactions in 1874, and continues to be the yardstick by which Victorian social-realism is judged.

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[66] Treuherz J, op.cit, p 85.

[67] Thomas J, *Victorian Narrative Painting*, Tate Publishing, London (2000).

[68] Fildes's *Houseless and Hungry* and his *Casual Ward* are discussed together from this latter perspective in Arscott C, 'From Graphic to Academic' in *Art and the Academy in the Nineteenth Century*, ed. Denis R C and Trodd C, Rutgers Univ. Press NJ (2000), pp 102-16

At this early stage in Fildes's career, such was his confidence in his future that he decided to build a house, and to put into it all the money he had. Moreover, 'the central feature of the house must be a Triumphal Staircase' leading up to his studio. Fildes foresaw, correctly, the time when visitors in their hundreds would be trooping on Show Sundays to see his year's work[69].

The idea for Fildes's next picture in the realist mode, *The Widower*, derived from his work on *The Casuals*. He was painting 'a rough-looking fellow with his child'. While they were resting behind a screen, Fildes peeped round, and there saw the motive for *The Widower*. The child had fallen asleep, and there was this great, rough fellow, possibly with only a copper or two in the world, caressing his child, watching it lovingly and smoothing its curls with his hand'[70]. The resulting picture, (fig.40[71]), larger than *The Casuals* at 5½ ft x 8 ft, is a narrative piece. The scene is a poor cottage. The child has died, and the father cradling it is sorrowing. The eldest daughter looks on, and three younger children play on the floor, unaware. When shown at the Academy of 1876, the painting's strong emotional appeal was acknowledged. L V Fildes quotes several press comments (without sources), for example: 'The picture which will probably be regarded as the most affecting in the exhibition is *The Widower* by Mr Fildes. In this work no realism is spared'; and again,'His beautiful picture may be hailed as a manly, conscientious and soulful piece of work, unstrained, undefaced by maudlin sentiment, but exquisitely touching'. On the other hand, the *Times* thought his subject 'not happily chosen...It is a great pity that painters do not bear more in mind the fact that their pictures are meant to adorn English living-rooms, and that intense painfulness,

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[69] Fildes L V, op.cit. pp 35 and 46

[70] How H, op.cit. p 124

[71] There is a reduced version of *The Widower*, 1904, in the Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool. The original (illustrated here) is in the Art Gallery of New South Wales.

overstrained expression, and great vehemence...are all qualities that make pictures unpleasant to live with'[72]. What the painting conveys, however, is 'pathos'. It is of the genre dealing with loss and the human condition. It might be read as implying that such tragedies fall more heavily on the poor, who nonetheless bear their sorrows with fortitude and dignity. This in turn could be considered socially subversive, in bestowing on the poor the kinds of qualities more usually associated with their betters. But it is difficult to see in the picture any overt social criticism.

By this stage, Fildes was emphatically one of those 'betters':

> A giving of dinners about the dates of the Academy's Sending-in Days would herald the opening of the London Season, which synchronized with Private View Day at the Academy. Not to have tickets for the Private View was a social flop, and hosts and hostesses were grateful to any member of the Academy who could spare them tickets[73].

Fildes's next 'big picture', *The Return of the Penitent*, exhibited at the RA in 1879, (fig 41) was based on a real incident he had witnessed. Sketching in a village, he had noticed 'a pale-faced girl' walking down the road, obviously wishing to escape attention. Asking who she was, he was told she was just out of Reading Gaol...she had had a baby which died[74]. Fildes constructed his narrative out of this: the girl has returned to find her home deserted. She crouches on the doorstep, while the neighbours stare. Fildes originally intended to call the painting *The Return of the Prodigal*, but was persuaded to change this to *Penitent.* Lines from Byron, which appear with the title in the Academy catalogue: 'Every woe a tear may claim/ Except an erring woman's shame', add a note of sympathy[75]. Again, the picture was

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[72] The *Times*, 8.5.1876, p 9

[73] L V Fildes, op.cit. p 70.

[74] How. H, op.cit. p 125

[75] Thomson D C, op.cit. p 7.

praised ('rapturously' as L V Fildes puts it). Significantly, 'Tom Taylor in *The Times* – who had disliked *The Widower* as something to live with, weighed in with an article in which he said; "I should, myself, rank this picture very far above anything its painter has yet exhibited. I have heard it called stagy. I fear that any painter who aims at telling a story dramatically must be prepared for this charge"'[76].

Clearly, with *The Return of the Penitent*, Fildes was moving to the uncontroversial mainstream of Victorian taste, and in his next major painting, *The Village Wedding*, (fig.42) he abandons 'pathos' completely. Again it is a large painting, 5¼ ft x 8 ft. It is crowded with figures walking in procession down the village street, and the mood is light-hearted. Fildes intended to paint the figures in modern costume, but found it impossible. 'It [modern costume] is so ugly and *nasty* I cannot bring myself to do it'. And later, he says he intends a scene 'with the coarseness and ugliness of immediately modern times pressed out of it, and yet not put back far enough for people to say I am not painting my own time'.[77]

With this painting, Fildes again had a popular success. Even before its exhibition at the Academy of 1883, it was praised by Lord Russell in the *Liverpool Daily Post*, on the basis of a studio preview. He noted particularly the 'realistic painting of all the dress in the picture'[78]. In mood and treatment, *The Village Wedding* has much in common with David Wilkie's *The Village Holiday* (1809-11), but is far removed from the world of *The Casuals*.

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[76] L V Fildes, op.cit. pp 49-50 and 56

[77] L V Fildes, ibid. pp 72-3

[78] L V Fildes, ibid. pp 82-3 and 85-6

Through the rest of the 1880s, Fildes painted mainly Venetian subjects, and portraits. In June 1890, however, *The Times* announced Henry Tate's foundation of 'A National Gallery of British Art' with a gift to the nation of fifty-five named paintings, plus two others 'now being painted' by Fildes and Frederick Leighton[79]. Fildes's painting was *The Doctor* (fig.43), a subject he had had in mind since the death of his son Philip in 1877, when the character and bearing of the doctor in attendance on the child had made a deep impression. The painting, again an 'eight-footer', would show a doctor watching over a sick child, with its parents in the background, as dawn filtered through the window, mingling with the lamplight. But the setting would be a simple cottage. For this, Fildes sketched fisherman's cottages, and from these a full-size interior was built in a corner of the studio. Two of Fildes's children were used for the child, and a professional model for the doctor, though the doctor as completed was thought to resemble Fildes himself.

Exhibited at the Academy in 1891, the picture was a triumph, with the crowds it attracted and with the critics. This was Fildes's last big narrative picture. It is certainly realist in style, but it transposes a rich man's experience (Fildes's) into a poor man's cottage, which tells us nothing about the medical care available to the poor at that time. To that extent, the picture deflects the possibility of social criticism. On the other hand, the message of the painting is one of comfort and reassurance in sickness, which may be considered a positive type of social commentary.

Hubert Herkomer (1849-1914). As in the case of Luke Fildes, Hubert Herkomer's career as an artist received its first impetus as an illustrator for *The Graphic*, but he found his way there by a much more circuitous route. Herkomer was born in the village of Waal, Bavaria,

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[79] L V Fildes, ibid. p117-8

the only child of Lorenz, a builder and woodcarver, and his wife Josephine, a gifted music teacher and pianist. In 1851, however, the family decided to emigrate to the United States, where relatives had already settled. Herkomer relates in his memoirs:

> Abortive though it was, the revolution of 1848 had shaken Germany to the core. From that period, and for many years following, every man who had any feeling for freedom found Germany intolerable; and this occasioned a great exodus of the best and strongest characters to what was universally considered the land of promise and freedom, AMERICA. It was to be expected that a man of my father's temperament, one of such independent thinking, such stern rectitude, and such liberal sympathies, should be influenced by the trend of thought that brought about a rising of the people against tyranny and injustice[80].

Stepping onto the quay in New York, however, Lorenz was immediately threatened and robbed – an incident which may have had some part, years later, in the genesis of one of Hubert's major paintings, *Pressing to the West: A Scene in Castle Garden, New York* (1884). Nor did the family prosper in the United States, and after six years they decided to leave America for England, arriving and settling in Southampton in 1857. Hubert was aged eight.

The family continued to live in hardship in Southampton, but new factors emerged. Hubert began to show signs of artistic talent, and his father conceived great ambitions for his son. After only six months at school, Hubert fell ill, and from then on Lorenz took charge of his education. Significantly, too, for the motivation of Herkomer's future career, Lorenz instilled into him his life dream, 'the dream of a great house built by the family! The question of money wherewith to build this house never entered our thoughts; it was *going* to be *done*, that was enough'.[81]

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[80] Herkomer H von, *The Herkomers* 2 vols (1910-11), pp 16-17

[81] Herkomer H, ibid, p 41-2

From 1863 to 1865, Herkomer underwent his first formal art training at the Southampton School of Art, where he considered the traditional teaching – drawing from the cast etc - 'stupid and worthless'[82]. Release from this came in 1865, when Lorenz received a commission from his brother in the US to carve copies of apostle statuettes from a monument in Munich. This enabled Hubert to travel with his father, and enrol at the prestigious Munich Academy. The tuition was no less traditional in Munich, and the regime 'anti-realist'. Hubert is likely, however, to have seen the work of an older student, Wilhelm Leibl, whose 'realism' was making an impact among his contemporaries. As naturalized British subjects by this time, father and son could remain abroad no longer than six months, so returned to Southampton.[83] This visit to the land of his birth would be followed by many more throughout his life, and may be said to have established in him a 'dual persona' – a duality which would become apparent in his art[84].

Herkomer's next step was to London, where he spent two summer terms, in 1866 and 1867 at the Department of Science and Art, South Kensington. Among the students there - including Luke Fildes - Fred Walker's work was attracting attention, and to Herkomer 'it seemed a new direction, a new light...had appeared on the horizon[85]'. Walker, who would become known as leader of the so-called 'Idyllist' School of 'poetic realism', was an influence on Herkomer intermittently throughout his subject-painting career, and one he struggled to overcome in

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[82] Herkomer H, ibid, p 66

[83] Herkomer H, ibid, p 91

[84] Herkomer probably felt like a German in Germany and an Englishman in England, but seems to have been perceived as an Englishman in Germany and a German in England. He did actually renounce British citizenship, when he married his late wife's sister in 1888 (such marriage being illegal in England), but was re-naturalized in 1897. When his citizenship was questioned by several Academicians, he deposited copies of his naturalization papers in the RA archives. (Edwards L M, *Herkomer – A Victorian Artist*, Ashgate, Aldershot, 1999, p 28).

[85] Herkomer H, op.cit. p 101.

asserting his own artistic personality[86]. At any rate, Luke Fildes, who had already begun his black-and-white career, encouraged Herkomer to try in the same field, and from 1868 illustrations by Herkomer began to appear in such papers as *The Quiver* and *Good Words for the Young.*

His breakthrough came when he saw some gypsies in camp on Wimbledon Common (a subject Walker had painted, fig.44), and decided to draw the scene, and try to get it accepted by the new *Graphic*. He made preliminary sketches, paying the gypsies to come to his lodgings, then drew on a wood block, which he took to Mr Thomas (fig.45). The drawing was immediately accepted, Thomas saying, 'As much work as you like to do of *this* quality I shall be glad to have'. 'Here at last' says Herkomer, 'was something tangible, something that meant a future; it now only depended on me to make money and a reputation. I honestly confess that money-making was my first thought, money wherewith to repay my parents, and to render their lives easier'. Herkomer adds, significantly, that when he subsequently returned to ask Thomas for subjects, Thomas told him to look for his own. 'In my heart I bitterly resented these words, but they were the words I needed: *they were the making of me as an artist*!' (His italics) [87].

Herkomer went on to provide more than fifty illustrations for the *Graphic*, almost all of them in the 1870s, though there were six for Thomas Hardy's *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, serialized in 1891. Edwards states:

> At least 16 of these [illustrations] formed the basis for later exhibited works in other media, or were reproduced as illustrations from paintings...they covered a wide range

[86] Herkomer H, ibid, p 121. See also Treble R, 'Herkomer and Fred Walker' in *A Passion for Work,* Watford Museum (1982), pp 19-32

[87] Herkomer H, ibid, p 148-9. That Herkomer was told to find his own subjects, adds credence to Fildes's story to the same effect.

> of subjects: 16 are urban scenes; 19 show contemporary life in Bavaria; 7 represent military subjects, including scenes of the Franco-Prussian War, and 3 belong to a series of 'Heads of the People'[88]

Some of the urban scenes show the lives of the poor, noteworthy among them, *A Sketch at a Concert Given to the Poor Italians in London* (fig.46, 1871), *Low Lodging House at St Giles* (fig.47.1872), and *Christmas in a Workhouse* (fig.48, 1876). From the 'Heads of the People' series, *The Coastguard* (fig.49, 1879) is impressive in its quiet dignity.

Two others of Herkomer's illustrations, *Sunday at Chelsea Hospital* (fig.50,1871) and *Old Age – A Study in the Westminster Union* (fig.51, double-page,1877)[89] would be used as the basis of major oil paintings, and the first of these, entitled *The Last Muster: Sunday in the Royal Hospital, Chelsea* (fig.52,1875), would make his reputation at the Academy. The second, entitled *Eventide: A Scene in the Westminster Union* (fig.53,1878), Herkomer regarded as a companion piece. These two paintings, and three others, *Pressing to the West (*fig.54,1884), *Hard Times* (fig.55,1885) and *On Strike* (fig.56,1891), are considered his main 'social-realist' oeuvre.

The Last Muster is a very large painting - 84½" high by 62½" wide – of Chelsea Pensioners attending service in the Chelsea Hospital Chapel. Based on studies using some of the pensioners as models it shows a narrative incident in which the central figure has indeed attended his 'last muster', while his companion, checking his pulse, realizes what has

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[88] Edwards L M, op.cit p 30. Edwards provides a catalogue of Herkomer's magazine illustrations (her Appendix 1).

[89] The text accompanying this image notes that 'Most of the inmates of our workhouses being old and weakly they ought, whatever their past failings, be treated with care and kindness, and of late years there has been much improvement in this respect. Of course, the great difficulty is that if the workhouse is made too comfortable numbers of old people trembling on the verge of pauperism would voluntarily seek its shelter. But without attempting to discuss this large and difficult subject...' The article goes on to quote a letter from Herkomer: 'These poor old bodies formed a most touching picture. Work they would, for industry was still in them; but it was often most childish work - still, it *was* work. The agony of threading their needles was affecting indeed'.

happened. It is a powerful image strong on portraiture, executed with uncompromising realism and, as Herkomer himself realized, 'so unlike Walker'[90]. Yet it was not a work of social criticism. Its appeal was to the pathos of old age, and to patriotic feeling for the old veteran whose duty was now done. It was an instant success, from the spontaneous applause by the Academy Council when the picture appeared before them, to the critical and popular acclaim in London, to the medal of honour it received at the Paris Universal Exhibition of 1878. And the popularity of the painting continued at many subsequent showings, and also in a lithograph version published in 1909.

The companion piece, *Eventide*, is a much more sombre painting than *The Last Muster*, emphasising, as does the *Graphic* drawing *Old Age* on which it is based, the bare spaces rendered in unsettlingly steep perspective. Yet the painting has lighter touches than the drawing. Flowers are introduced on the table, and an attentive young woman is assisting the work of the inmates. *Eventide* was less successful with critics and public than *The Last Muster*, though the *Athenaeum* was touched by it: 'Should Mr Herkomer's beautiful work draw out more strongly our sympathies for our less fortunate fellow beings, [it] will in its more important object have fulfilled the intentions of its author'[91] But sympathy, it may be argued, is one thing and protest a different matter. The article accompanying the *Graphic* drawing, as has been noted, 'sits on the fence', while the painting is in some respects a softened version of the drawing. Yet even the flowers on the table suggest the pathetic inadequacy of the comfort they afford. If the painting contains no overt political message, it may be thought, and may have been intended, to contain an element of covert social criticism, merely in presenting the bleak environment in which these aged women lived.

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[90] Herkomer H, op.cit. p 202

[91] Quoted in Treuherz op.cit. p 95.

In the period 1877-79, Herkomer painted three important watercolour portraits – of Wagner, Ruskin (fig.68) and Tennyson, and in 1881 he decided to focus his painting career on portraiture. It was during his first portrait-painting expedition to the United States in 1882-3, however, that he conceived and began his third 'social-realist' painting, *Pressing to the West: A Scene in Castle Garden, New York*. Herkomer says of this painting, which he completed in England in 1884, and which clearly carried a personal emotional charge for him:

> It represented emigrants housed in "Castle Garden" prior to being sent westward. The extraordinary medley of nationalities interested me; but the subject touched me in another way that was more personal. Here I saw the emigrant's life and hardships – conditions in which my parents found themselves when they left the Fatherland for this Land of Promise. But between that date and the time when I witnessed that heterogeneous mass of humanity this asylum had been given them for their protection against sharpers[92].

This 'asylum' was no doubt an improvement, but the scene Herkomer depicts is hardly one of comfort, as men, women and children crowd together, standing, sitting or lying on the bare floor. And again we have the threatening perspective, with the figures on the left appearing almost to be sliding, as on a heaving deck, symbolizing the insecurity of their situation. The painting received mixed reviews when exhibited in England – either it was a 'splendid work' or it was a pointless exercise in squalor. Ruskin, vehement as ever, did not like it:

> Some artists are apt to become satirists and reformers instead of painters; to use the indignant passion of their freedom no less vainly than if they had sold themselves into slavery. Thus Mr Herkomer, whose true function is to show us the dancing Tyrolese peasants to the fife and zither, spends his best strength in painting a heap of promiscuous emigrants in the agonies of starvation[93].

Perhaps this is the best indication that this painting was indeed a genuine work of social-realism.

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[92] Herkomer H, op.cit. p 245. Edwards L M, op.cit. p 104 adds: 'Castle Garden...was the port of entry for New York and served as an immigrant station and employment hall between 1855 and 1892 [when Ellis Island became the official port of entry]. Those who wished to move on to the Western states often waited many weeks at the site until jobs were found for them'.

[93] Quoted in Treuherz, op.cit. p 96

In 1885, Herkomer produced a further work of social-realism, entitled *Hard Times : 1885*, a title evoking Charles Dickens's novel of that name, published in 1854. In 1873, Herkomer had settled his parents in the Hertfordshire village of Bushey. By 1884, he had opened an Art School there, and was completing the Herkomer family dream of a grand house, which he called Lululaund, in memory of his second wife. But the country, and the countryside, were suffering renewed economic recession in the 1880s, and Herkomer's painting reflects this. He says of the painting:

> It articulated a distress amongst the labouring classes, poignantly felt by them that year. Hundreds of honest labourers wandered through the country in search of work; the man, with pickaxe and shovel tied together – his only stock-in-trade – and his bulky bundle of household goods (that had escaped the pawnbroker); the woman following [with] the babe wrapped in her shawl; and the other little ones trudging after father and mother...[94]

The painting (fig 55, detail, left half) depicts such a group. In the complete painting, the standing man gazes down a long lane into the empty distance. But he presents an image of hope and courage, not of defeat. There is evidence to suggest that the motif for the painting was actually the idea of a student of Herkomer's, and it seems that the models used were a fully employed local labourer and his family. But hardship of the kind depicted was not imaginary. And again there may be some personal feeling of Herkomer's invested in this painting. In relating his father's early life, he describes the custom of 'wanderjahr', according to which the skilled workman, out of apprenticeship, sets off on a journey on foot, seeking work where he can find it. Lorenz, however, on his wanderjahr, 'indignantly refused to resort to the usual methods of begging on the way'. Herkomer presents this wanderjahr as a time of freedom and hope, not of despair, and it is possible to see something of this in the 'idealizing' qualities in *Hard Times*[95]. But the message which Herkomer seems to have

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[94] Herkomer H, op.cit. pp 250-1

[95] Herkomer H, ibid, p 10-11

taken from his own family's earlier deprivation was the conventional Victorian one: the need for self-reliance and hard work, and he appears, at any rate by this stage, to have had little patience with those who protested against the system[96]. The painting was nonetheless seen as reformist, and condemned or praised largely on that account.

Herkomer made his final return to painting in the social-realist mode with *On Strike*, his diploma picture painted on attaining full membership of the RA in 1891 – the same year that Luke Fildes also exhibited his final painting in this mode, *The Doctor.* As indicated in Appendix II, there had been social unrest in the capital through the later 1880s, culminating in the great Dock Strike of 1889, and the issue of unionism and the use of strike action was very much to the fore.

Herkomer's response in *On Strike* is an image of uncompromising realism (fig.56). The picture is large – 7 ft 5¾" high by 4 ft 1¾" wide – and the central figure of the striker is presented close up in the picture space at over life-size, his wife at his shoulder with a baby on her arm. But how is the painting to be 'read'? Is the looming figure of the striker monumental and steadfast, or threatening? Is his expression determined, truculent or merely puzzled? And is he defending his family's livelihood or putting it at risk? A further possibility, not much noted, is that the striker has no livelihood worthy of the name, and is striking to achieve one. This was certainly the case in the London docks, where labour was casual, uncertain and underpaid. But the painting is not located specifically in town or country, and could equally relate to agricultural unrest. The painting's title does not tell us how to regard it or what to think, and there is, essentially, an ambivalence at the heart of this painting, as probably also in the artist's mind. But by this stage, Herkomer was coming to

[96] Herkomer H, *My School and my Gospel*, pp 3-5

see his role as that of objective recorder of his times, as valuable in portraiture as in the field of social-realism.

Francis Montague [Frank] Holl (1845-88), had a career sufficiently similar to those of Luke Fildes and Hubert Herkomer, to be bracketed with them and with the *Graphic*, but there were distinct dissimilarities too. Holl had established a reputation as a painter before beginning work for the *Graphic* in 1871/2, though as his daughter and biographer puts it, his association with the paper was 'the means of bringing the "good times" to my parents. The work was regular, and the pay good and reliable'.[97] But Holl's career was also a good deal shorter than those of Fildes and Herkomer – he died young at the age of 43.

Holl was, however, an early achiever. Entering the Royal Academy Schools in 1860 at age fifteen, he won a silver and then a gold medal, the latter, in 1863, for a religious painting *Abraham about to Sacrifice Isaac*. The following year, aged nineteen, he became an exhibitor, with a portrait and a subject painting of a beggar woman and child, *Turned out of Church*. His subject paintings were to continue very much in this sombre vein. He exhibited at the Academy in the following three years, with subjects such as *The Ordeal* in 1866 and *Convalescent* in 1867, and in 1869 came *The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away: blessed be the name of the Lord*. Treuherz notes that the title comes from *Job* 1.21, but that the subject is from Mrs Craik's novel of 1851, *The Head of the Family*, which opens with the reunion of a family after the death of the father, and the assumption of his role by the son. This was Holl's first great subject picture. It attracted approving notice, to the extent that Queen Victoria wished to buy it, but was refused – it had been sold before exhibition to a family friend, who declined to give it up.

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[97] Reynolds A M. *The Life and Work of Frank Holl*, Methuen 1912, p 96.

For this painting, Holl also received the award of a travelling scholarship, an episode which throws important light on his character and outlook. After two months in Italy, he resigned the scholarship, resolving 'to avoid all the pitfalls of mannerism [believing] rightly that greater originality, honesty, and interest would be found in an English painter's pictures of England if they were the result of the close and watchful study of Nature.'[98] But later, he and his wife formed an affinity with Holland, which his daughter ascribes to the Holl family's Dutch origin[99].

In any event, Holl seems to have been deeply impressed and influenced in his subject paintings by the work of the Dutch painter Jozef Israels (1824-1911) – and later in his portraiture by Rembrandt. At the International Exhibition held in London in 1862, Israels exhibited *Fishermen carrying a Drowned Man*, in which the leading figures are massed darkly against the beach and sea. The picture was widely praised, and was bought by an English collector.[100] Israels had come to specialize in paintings of fishermen, or women awaiting their return, but later broadened his repertoire with peasant scenes or labourers at work, suggesting the influence of Millet and French Realism. Holl in his turn took up such subjects, and in 1871 completed *No Tidings from the Sea*, a commission from the Queen for which he had free choice of subject (fig.57).

In December of that year, Holl began his parallel career as an illustrator for the *Graphic*, which would last some six years. He received a visit from J D (Sir James) Linton, who

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[98] *Celebrities at Home DXXXVI. Mr Frank Holl, RA at 'The Three Gables, FitzJohn's Avenue*, The World 21.12.1887, p 6.

[99] Reynolds A M, ibid. p 203. The Holls may or may not have been of Dutch origin (the *ODNB* says that Holl's grandfather, William Holl the elder, was 'apparently of German origin') but it is of interest that the Holls themselves believed they were of Dutch ancestry

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[100] Israels's painting is now in the National Gallery

suggested he try a drawing on the block, for the paper which 'was gathering to itself all the rising young talent of the day – Herkomer, Fildes, Boyd-Houghton, Pinwell, Small, Caton Woodville and many others, all of which have long ere this become household names in the world of illustrators'[101]. The result was *At a Railway Station - A Study* (fig.58), which Treuherz describes as 'A young soldier saying goodbye to his parents, simple working people; next to them a governess is examining an empty purse'[102]. Reynolds's version is: 'a medley of nondescripts waiting for the train'. As in the case of some of Fildes's and Herkomer's early drawings for the *Graphic*, this one would be turned into a successful painting for the RA (exhibited in 1873).

Most of Holl's subsequent illustrations for the *Graphic* were of general subjects, in particular his twenty-four drawings for the serialization of Anthony Trollope's *Phineas Redux* (from June 1874). A number of his major 'social-realist' paintings, however, began, like the *Railway Station*, as illustrations in the *Graph*ic. These were *Deserted – A Foundling*[103] (fig.59), *Gone – Euston Station,*[104] (fig.60) depicting the departure of emigrants on the train for Liverpool, and, most importantly, *Newgate: Committed for Trial.*[105] (fig.65). There was also 'traffic' the other way: Holl's painting for the 1872 Academy, *I am the Resurrection and the Life*, a country funeral procession headed by a man and his daughters, was subsequently engraved for the *Graphic*.

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101 Reynolds A M, op.cit. p 96.

102 Treuherz, op.cit. p 57-8 and p 76

103 Drawing in *The Graphic* 26.4.73, painting 1874.

104 Drawing in *The Graphic* 19.2.76, painting 1877

105 Drawing in *The Graphic* (1877?), painting 1878

Holl's career continued meanwhile in the RA – he was elected ARA in 1878 and RA in 1883 – and through the period to 1878, he exhibited subject paintings such as *Her First Born,* (fig.61) another funeral scene, and a pair of paintings *Hush!* and *Hushed* (fig.62 and 63). In the first of these, a mother tends her sick baby, and in the second the baby has died and the mother grieves. Another painting, *The Song of the Shirt* (fig.64), on the theme of exhausted semptresses, not exhibited at the RA, may have been sold direct from the studio.

In style, Holl's work is characterised by a direct realism of treatment, and subdued colour and tonal range. In subject matter, the emphasis is clearly on 'pathos' – themes of grieving and loss, a lugubriousness of which critics complained but which nonetheless proved popular with the public. It is possible, however, to distinguish between subjects which simply depict the eternally sorrowful aspects of the human condition, and those which at least imply some social comment or criticism. This dichotomy may reflect two rather different aspects of Holl's character and outlook, both deriving from family influence and experience in childhood.

The daughter's biography, read with due reserve, is a main source for this. She depicts Holl in childhood as weak and sickly, and subject to a puritanical regime in which all pleasure was regarded as sinful.[106] Whatever the truth of this, it seems clear that Frank Holl emerged into manhood disposed to dwell on the gloomy side of life – and with an obsession to justify himself through unremitting work. This latter was to have fatal consequences.

But a further influence came through the family's radical outlook. Reynolds says:

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[106] Reynolds A M, op.cit. p 12-13

> [Holl's} grandfather [William Holl the elder], who in addition to being a most able engraver, was a most eccentric character, a pure visionary with utopian, socialistic ideas on human equality and the ending of poverty and distress; he was probably one of the earliest socialists...These ideas, my great-grandfather shared with his son, so that my father grew up in an air of socialism[107].

Referring to Holl's rambles 'in the very poorest quarters of London' in search of subjects, Reynolds suggests this latter influence was uppermost:

> It was scarcely a morbid attraction for the seamy side which led him forth upon these unsavoury peregrinations, but rather, I take it, a latent idea that, by depicting them forcibly and poignantly in his own work, he might bring home to the indifferent eyes and hearts of the public the wretched and iniquitous state of affairs which lies close to our own doors. [108].

Deserted – A Foundling was the result of one of Holl's 'peregrinations' in the East End, when he witnessed a baby abandoned by its mother and discovered by a policeman. Fig 59 shows the illustration which appeared in the *Graphic*, and which attracted van Gogh's admiration. The painting based on it is in a private collection. 'Foundlings' were of course a symptom – not new to Victorian times – of an attitude in society which condemned the unmarried mother, and which offered no means of support by which she could keep her baby. Fildes's *The Return of the Penitent* relates to the same issue.

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Holl's most important 'social-realist' painting, *Newgate: Committed for Trial* (1878) also derived from direct observation, though of the scene in the prison several years before the picture was painted. Newgate prison had a very long history and a notorious reputation, though conditions had improved somewhat for women, under Elizabeth Fry's influence.

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[107] Reynolds A M, ibid. In this passage, Reynolds recounts an anecdote about William which she sets, incorrectly, during the ant-catholic Gordon riots of 1780. The *ODNB* entry on the Holl family has what appears to be the correct version: 'Holl was an advanced liberal in politics with strongly held views on social equality. At the time of the Spa Fields riots in 1816 [after a meeting calling for Parliamentary reform] he exposed himself and his family to great risk by concealing the ringleader, James Watson, son of the radical James Watson (1766-1836), and helping him escape to America'. The *ODNB* entry for James Watson has a reproduction of an engraving of him by William Holl.

[108] Reynolds A M, ibid. p 108.

The prison had also been the site of public hangings until 1868. Holl was invited to Newgate by its Governor, and the visit made a deep impression. He says in a letter:

> Prisoners of all sorts of crime were there – the lowest brutal criminal – swindlers, forgers, boy thieves..The scene was the part of Newgate called the cage – in which prisoners while on trial are permitted at certain hours, and on certain days, to see their friends – on the inner side the prisoners are placed, and in the passage – their friends are conducted to them...It is particularly impressive for scenes of such pathos and agony of mind on both sides take place[109].

The painting, based on the *Graphic* illustration, is large – 5 ft high by 7 ft wide - and full of movement and drama, and seems fully to convey the 'pathos and agony' Holl saw there. It is 'realist' in that it aims to present reality unadorned, but ambivalent in its message. If it is 'social-realist', it is so in posing the question why – under what social pressures - these people found themselves where they were, and to what extent society itself had a responsibility.

But 1878 was the year Holl also exhibited a portrait, which received more praise than *Newgate.* He was advised by colleagues to turn his attention to portraiture, and did so, with a portrait of Samuel Cousins, the mezzotint engraver. When this was exhibited the following year, he found himself overwhelmed with portrait commissions, and his career entered a different and final phase.

Meanwhile, in these years between the mid-1870s and mid-1880s, the young Vincent van Gogh was attempting to find his role in life. He was apprenticed to the art dealers Goupil & Co.in the Hague, and in the years 1873 – 75 he worked at their London branch. By the early 1880s, back in the Hague and determined on a career as an artist, he writes:

> ...when I was in London, I used to go every week to the show windows of the printing offices of the *Graphic* and the *London News* to see the new issues. The impressions I

[109] Quoted in Treuherz, op.cit p 80

> got on the spot were so strong that, notwithstanding all that has happened to me since, the drawings are clear in my mind...my enthusiasm for those things is rather stronger than it was even then[110].

In the winter of 1882 – 83, he began collecting back-issues of the *Graphic*, including one major set of 21 volumes from the 1870s, and the *Graphic* artists are frequently mentioned in his letters at this period. The following is representative:

> What I appreciate in Herkomer, Fildes, Holl and the other founders of the *Graphic*, the reason why they still mean more to me than Gavarni and Daumier, and will continue to do so, is that while the latter seem to look on society with malice, the former – as well as men like Millet, Breton, De Groux, Israels – chose subjects which are as true as Gavarni's or Daumier's, but have something noble and a more serious sentiment....An artist needn't be a clergyman or a churchwarden, but he certainly must have a warm heart for his fellow men[111].

Van Gogh was also an avid reader of English authors, most particularly Dickens and George Eliot, both of whom he believed answered to these sentiments. Influences on him from Dickens and Fildes come together in a quite late painting, *Gauguin's Chair* (1888), which seems clearly to have references both to Fildes's *The Empty Chair*, drawn after Dickens's death, and to Fildes's illustration for Edwin Drood, *Sleeping it off*, in which a candle rests on a chair, as in the Gauguin painting (figs.72, 73 and 74). Noteworthy, too, is van Gogh's apparent use of an illustration by Boyd Houghton for Dickens's *Hard Times*, which shows Thomas Gradgrind, late in the novel, despairing with head in hands. The same stance appears in a drawing by van Gogh, of which there are several versions, one of them with the English title *At Eternity's Gate* (1882). This image is referred to further below.

The Potato Eaters (1885) is the best known of van Gogh's paintings at this stage of his career. A dimly lit Dutch interior showing a peasant family at table, it stresses the hardship

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[110] Quoted in Pickvance R, *English Influences on Vincent van Gogh*, catalogue of an exhibition organised by the Univ. of Nottingham & the Arts Council (1974-5), p 28.

[111] Pickvance R, ibid. p 39

and poverty of their lives. Van Gogh's art would soon be changed utterly by a move to Paris, but the importance he attached to the *Graphic* artists in his formative years as an artist must tend to add credibility to the proposition that they offered something genuine and distinctive.

Fig.35. Fildes, Luke, *Houseless and Hungry*, 4.12.1869, *Graphic*

Fig.36. Fildes, Luke, *Miss or Mrs?* 25.12.1871, *Graphic.*

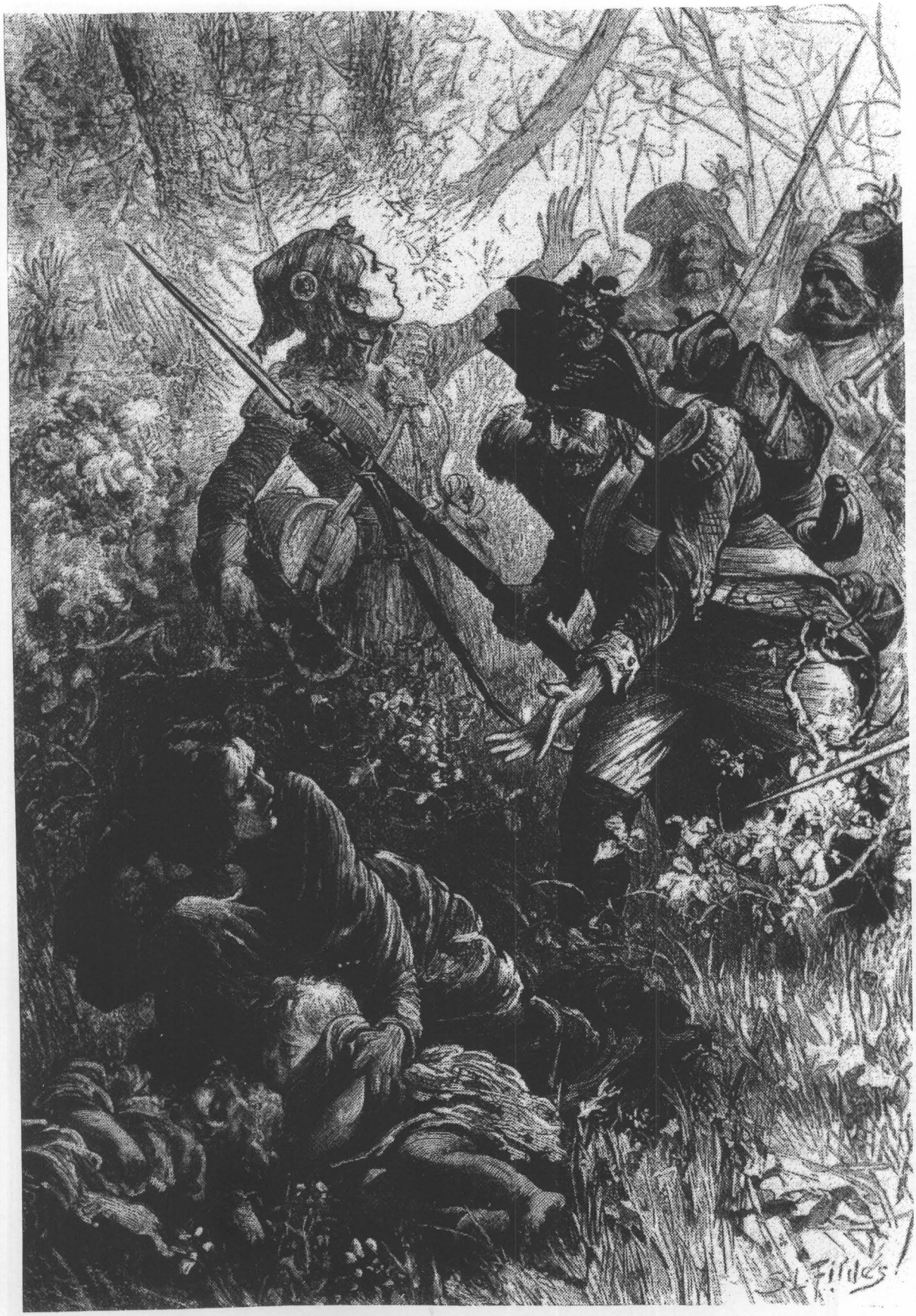


Fig.37. Fildes, Luke, *"Ninety-Three" – The Fugitives in the Forest of La Saudraie,* 28.2.1874, *Graphic.*

Figure 38. Fildes, Luke, *Applicants for Admission to a Casual Ward*, Royal Holloway and Bedford New College, Surrey, 174.

Available at: http://www.bridgemanart.com

Fig.39. Fildes, Luke 'Studies for 'Houseless and Hungry', *Graphic*, 1869, in Myers B, *Apollo Magazine*, July 1982, and *Strand Magazine*, July 1893.

Figure 40. Fildes, Luke, *The Widower*, Art Gallery of New South Wales, 1876 (replica, 1904, in Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool)

Available at: http://www.bridgemanart.com

Figure 41. Fildes, Luke, *The Return of the Penitent*, Cardiff City Hall, 1879.

Figure 42. Fildes, Luke, *The Village Wedding*, Private Collection, 1883.

Available at: http://www.bridgemanart.com

Figure 43. Fildes, Luke, *The Doctor*, The Tate Gallery, London, 1891.

Available at: http://www.tate.org.uk

Figure 44. Walker, Frederick, *The Vagrants*, The Tate Gallery, London, 1867.

Available at: http://www.tate.org.uk

Fig.45. Herkomer, Hubert, *A Gypsy Encampment on Putney Common*, 1870, *Graphic*.

Fig.46. Herkomer, Hubert, *A Concert given to the Poor Italians in London*, 1871, *Graphic*.

Fig.47. Herkomer, Hubert, *Low Lodging House, St.Giles*, 10.2.1872, *Graphic*.

Fig.48. Herkomer, Hubert, *Christmas in a Workhouse*, 1876, *Graphic*, Christmas Number.

Fig.49. Herkomer, Hubert, *Heads of the People, the Coast Guardsman,* 20.9.1879, *Graphic*.

Fig.50. Herkomer, Hubert, *Sunday at Chelsea Hospital*, 18.2.71, *Graphic*.

Fig.51. Herkomer, Hubert, *Old Age – A Study in the Westminster Union*, 7.4.1877, *Graphic*.

Figure 52. Herkomer, Hubert, *The Last Muster: Sunday in the Royal Hospital, Chelsea*, Lady Lever Art Gallery, Port Sunlight, 1875.

Available at: http://www.bridgemanart.com

Figure 53. Herkomer, Hubert, *Eventide: A Scene in the Westminster Union*, Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool, 1878.

Available at: http://www.bridgemanart.com

Figure 54. Herkomer, Hubert, *Pressing to the West: A Scene in the Castle Garden*, New York, Museum der Bildenden Kűnste, Leipzig, 1884.

Figure 55. Herkomer, Hubert, *Hard Times*, Manchester City Art Galleries, 1885.

Available at: http://www.bridgemanart.com

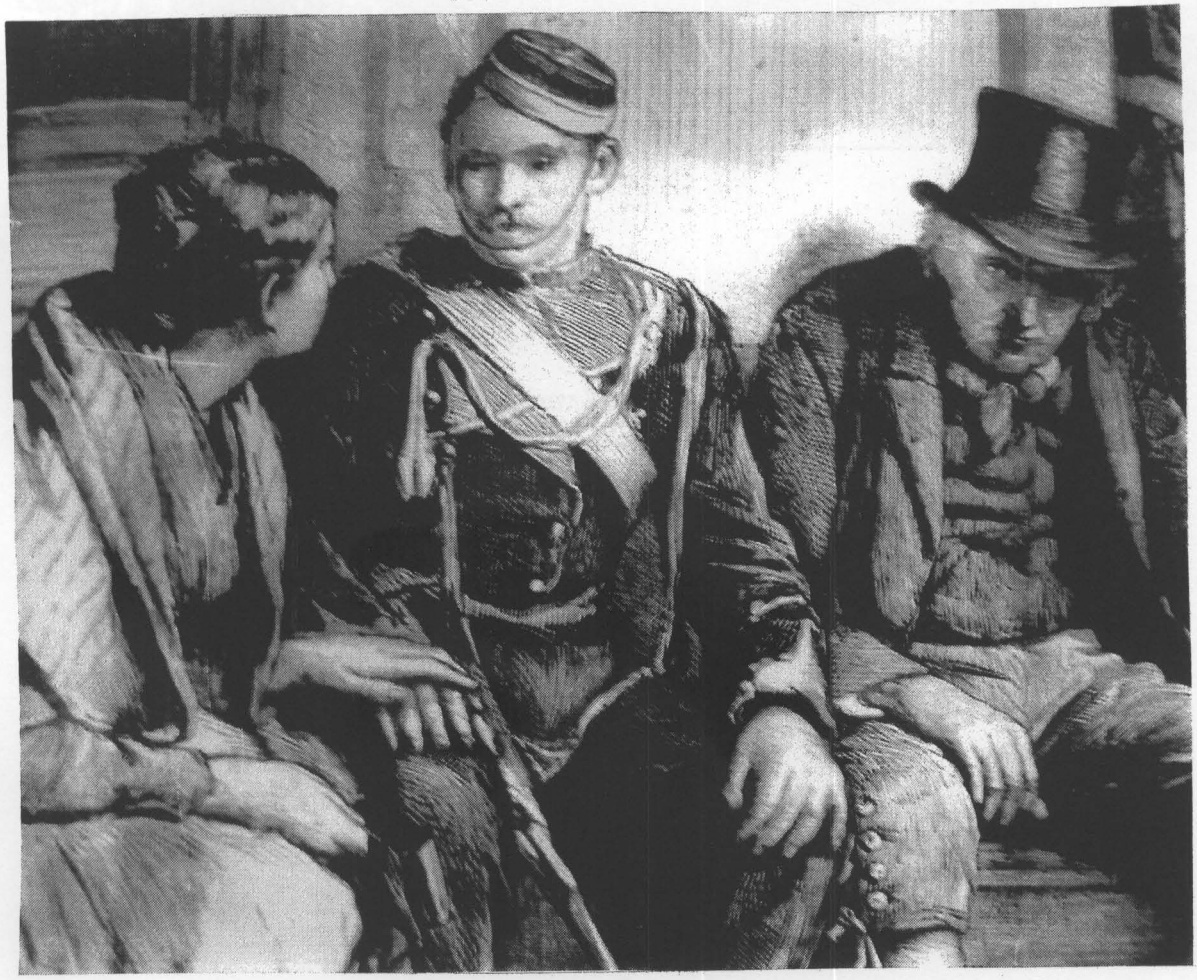
Figure 56. Herkomer, Hubert, *On Strike*, Royal Academy of Arts, 1891.

Available at: http://www.bridgemanart.com

Figure 57. Holl, Frank, *No Tidings from the Sea*, H.M. The Queen, 1870.

Available at: http://www.royalcollection.org.uk

Fig.58. Holl, Frank, *At a Railway Station – a study*, Manchester Art Galleries, Graphic 1872.



(Detail of the above)

Fig. 59. Holl, Frank, *London Sketches: The Foundling'*, 3.5.1873, *Graphic.*

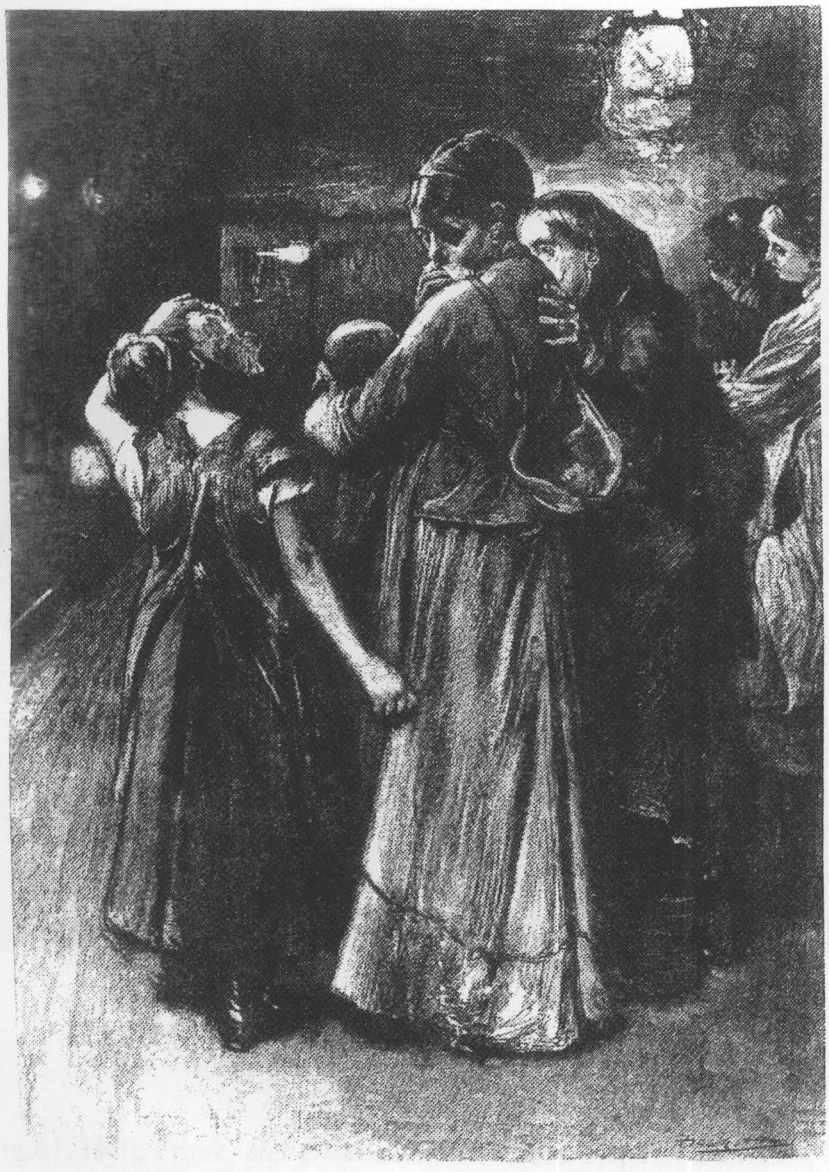


Fig. 60. Holl, Frank, 'Gone' – *Euston Station*, 19.2.1876, *Graphic*.

Figure 61. Holl, Frank, *Death of Her First Born*, Sheffield City Art Galleries, 1877.

Available at: http://www.bridgemanart.com

Figure 62. Holl, Frank, *Hush!* Tate Gallery, London, 1877.

Available at: http://www.tate.org.uk

Figure 63. Holl, Frank, *Hushed*, Tate Gallery, London, 1877.

Available at: http://www.tate.org.uk

Figure 64. Holl, Frank, *The Song of the Shirt*, Royal Albert Memorial Museum, Exeter, 1875.

Available at: http://www.bridgemanart.com

Figure 65. Holl, Frank, *Newgate: Committed for Trial*, Royal Holloway and Bedford New College, Surrey, 1878.

Available at: http://www.bridgemanart.com

PART II THE UNMAKING

CHAPTER 4 ENDGAMES

The glittering prizes for Victorian artists consisted of high status professionally and in society, wealth, fine houses and honours. Fildes and Herkomer achieved all these, and Holl achieved all but the last, being denied honours only by premature death.

Holl had been the first of the three to devote himself largely to portraiture, following the success of the Cousins portrait in 1879 and the flood of commissions it engendered. The Reynolds biography gives this a rather different slant. On a visit to Holland (Reynolds says probably in 1881), Holl saw the Rembrandts for the first time, and,

> It was here I think that my father first realized the enormous possibilities that lay in the art of portraiture – to what heights of dignity and impressiveness it could rise in the hands of a master...The modes of Victorian genre lost their hold on him, and save under some external compulsion he did not again paint a subject picture with narrative intention[112].

L V Fildes also refers to Holl's change of direction:

> On the opening of the Academy [in 1883] there had been some criticism in the Press of Frank Holl, the newly elected RA, for having turned from "subject" pictures to portraiture, and my father, who in a few years' time would himself be turning to portraiture, had written to Holl deprecating the criticism.

Holl replied:

> I troubled over the notice in the *Telegraph,* and read it...with some contempt...but as he seems to think that portraiture is not a particularly high ambition, then surely he lays himself open to being considered rather ignorant...for I fancy, and I am sure we all do, that the portraits in the Galleries of Europe do not form by any means the least important part[113]

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[112] Reynolds A M, op.cit. p 198

[113] Fildes L V, op.cit. pp 86-7

Was Holl trying to convince himself? He would be well aware of the loss of autonomy as a creative artist. But there was no denying that portraiture was very lucrative, and also that it had practical advantages. There would be no searching for and agonizing over a subject, which might take many months to develop, before being launched before the not always appreciative critics. And subject paintings were not usually commissioned, with a more or less guaranteed sale, as was the case provided a portrait sitter was satisfied with the likeness. Moreover, the income mattered. There was now an expensive establishment to keep up. In 1881, Holl commissioned Norman Shaw, as Fildes had done in the mid-1870s, to build him a fine London house, and would again commission Shaw to build him an even larger second home in Surrey. Leading Academicians were expected to keep up a certain style, and Holl obeyed[114].

Yet success and the move to portraiture gave Holl no release from 'agonizing'. Throughout his career, he had been a driven man. Writing from Venice while on his travelling scholarship, he said:

> I know I work very hard, yet not to work is harder work still to me...*hunger for work is always on me, and it is when I cannot satisfy this hunger that I get so worn out.* You may wonder...why I cannot enjoy what I am seeing...I do enjoy it, if only I could banish *my tormenting conscience for work*; but it never lets me alone, and if I do nothing I feel of no use[115].

The constant press of portrait commissions, which he felt unable to refuse, began to undermine his health. And there was another factor. Holl lacked the self-confidence of Fildes and Herkomer, and was not a little in awe of his eminent subjects, particularly so in the case of Gladstone, whom he painted at Hawarden late in 1887. Reynolds says, 'This

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[114] When interviewed by *The World* in December 1887 for its 'Celebrities at Home' series, (op.cit), Holl had just returned from Hawarden. The article dwells respectfully on Holl's surroundings. It also mentions, in passing, that 'Mr Holl holds, as might be expected, no views on political questions of a very pronounced character'.

[115] Reynolds A M, op.cit. p 314

portrait sounded the first stroke of my father's death-knell', and she quotes his comment that, 'I became very excited while going to Hawarden, for I felt like a man about to walk the slack wire before the world, and I feared a failure...I had worked myself up in to a state of semi-exhaltation, for I had determined to paint the picture in a "do-or-die" fashion, feeling that if I hesitated I was lost'[116]. He died a few months later, in July 1888.

Shortly afterwards, Harry Quilter published an article lamenting the premature deaths of Fred Walker, George Pinwell, Frank Holl, and others, and in Holl's case also lamenting his abandonment of subject painting for portraiture. He wrote:

> The native quality of his art was pathos; the true domain of his painting was tragedy...We do strange things to our artists in England: we are desperately afraid lest they should not be respectable and successful; we judge their art by the dwelling place of its master in a fashionable locality, by the amount of material dollars he gains per annum. How can a painter be expected to stand against such temptation? "Here is a palace for you and ten thousand a year, and a prince for your model!" So cries the world...but the great emotional artist of modern days has, in obedience to the bidding of society and success, stifled his soul within him, has forgotten the folk of his own rank and stifled that habit of mind which once called forth his truest sympathies[117].

It should noted that what Quilter saw in Holl's subject paintings was *pathos*, not social criticism, though he himself is here criticizing Victorian society, without waiting for the twentieth century.

As to the *quality* of Holl's portraiture, Quilter concedes him a place in the front rank, though his comparison of Holl with Carolus-Duran, a French portraitist close to Courbet and the Realists who became a fashionable painter of aristocratic women, is not, perhaps, intended to be wholly flattering. Figs.66 and 67 show two of Holl's portraits. Both are realist in style, and that of his father, Francis, is particularly sympathetic.

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[116] Reynolds A M, ibid pp 271-2

[117] Quilter H, 'In Memoriam' *The Universal Review*, 15.8.1888, pp 478-93

Herkomer for his part states in his memoirs that during a painting trip in Wales, in 1881, 'I made the resolve henceforth to devote myself chiefly to portraiture'. There is no explanation, or indication of heart-searching. He alludes, however, to the conditions obtaining at that time:

> That was the period – which lasted a decade and more – when the patronage of art in England was at its height. Everybody in any position and possessing wealth, newly acquired or otherwise, was desirous of being painted. The few portrait painters then practising were more than fully employed. Present conditions [in 1910] are very different, the sitters having decreased, and the portrait painters disproportionately increased[118].

Herkomer's plan of campaign was to do a specimen portrait, and for that purpose he selected his friend, Archibald Forbes, a prominent war correspondent, 'the very incarnation of strong manhood'. This portrait brought forth other sitters, who thought they resembled Forbes, and, says Herkomer 'I did my best to make heroes of them all'. Thereafter, he quickly advanced to the front rank among portrait painters. He had an international success with *The Lady in White* (1885), and after Holl's death, reigned with Fildes until the advent of John Singer Sargent. Nor was he without royal patronage in England and Germany, and in 1901 he was summoned to Osborne House to paint a watercolour of Queen Victoria on her deathbed. Two of his portraits are shown at figs.68 and 69.

And, of course, he needed the money for that Herkomer dream house, Lululaund. This dream was realized. It was an extraordinary castle-like residence, enshrining the best creative craft work of two generations of Herkomers. But it was Hubert's commitment and 'the money he acquired furiously painting portraits that enabled him to be almost as extravagant as he wanted'. The exterior was a 'Romanesque hybrid' designed by the American architect H H Richardson (in exchange for a portrait), while the interior was

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[118] Herkomer H, op.cit. pp 239-40

Gothic, a romantic reference back to the Herkomer homeland.[119]. The range of arts and crafts Herkomer pursued and inspired at Lululaund, his School of Art, and his other teaching and lecturing, including his Slade Professorship of Fine Art at Oxford (1885-94) mark him out as much more of a 'Renaissance man' than either Holl or Fildes, And his involvement in such diverse interests as early film- making and even motor racing, took him into the modern world[120]. His achievements were honoured with an English knighthood, a Prussian Order of Merit and a Bavarian 'von' (for which he canvassed).

Herkomer hoped that Lululaund, embodying his own version of a union of art and craft, would stand as a monument for generations to come. It was not to be. A kindly providence decreed that Herkomer himself should die in 1914, on the eve of the First World War. His final piece for the RA that year (a strange failure of judgement) was a colossal group portrait (11 ft by 18 ft) of the Managers and Directors of a rather well-known armaments firm – Krupps of Essen. His family were in Germany when war broke out, and remained there in the war years. Lululaund was neglected, vandalized and eventually demolished on the eve of the Second World War[121].

Luke Fildes was the last of the three to move into portraiture, the impetus coming, somewhat ironically, from Paris. After the Academy opening of 1886, L V Fildes relates that

> my parents and my uncle [Woods] paid their customary visit to Paris and renewed their conviction of the Salon's inferiority. There was, however, for once in the Salon, a painting that gave my father an idea. The painting was a woman's portrait by Carolus-Duran, and the idea it gave my father was to try his hand at something of the kind and do a portrait of my mother.

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[119] Setford D, *Herkomer – A Passion for Work*, op.cit. p 12.

[120] This aspect of Herkomer's career is discussed in Nead L, 'Paintings, Films and Fast Cars: A Case Study of Hubert von Herkomer', in *Art History*, April 2002, Vol.25, 2, pp 240-55.

[121] Edwards L M, op.cit. p 112

This was the portrait, exhibited in 1887, which put Fildes 'at one bound into the front rank of contemporary portrait painters'. L V Fildes adds that, with the one exception of *The Doctor*, there would be no more 'big' pictures. For forty years, the rest of his life, he specialized in portraits, with only occasional and mostly minor excursions into his Venetian style and never again into Social-Realism. [122]

Fildes was the longest-lived of the three, dying in 1927 aged eighty-three. Perhaps the most interesting aspects of his career in this period are his work on royal portraiture, and the encroachment of modernism, which Herkomer will have been aware of before 1914, but Holl quite possibly hardly at all. Fildes was first introduced to royal portraiture with an invitation to paint Princess Victoria Mary of Teck in 1891, but ten years later, an Accession Portrait was required for Edward VII. Fildes was chosen, and the King came to sittings in Fildes's studio, which he pronounced 'one of the finest rooms in London[123],

But, as L V Fildes relates, the completion of the painting was by no means the end of the matter. Every Embassy and Legation, and Government establishment at home and throughout the Empire must have a copy. And as well as the official copies, it was open to Fildes to sell private copies to City companies and the like, and the engraving rights, as he did, to Agnews. L V Fildes says, 'The actual copying was done by a team of artists under the painter's supervision, and a situation was revived like those in the studios of the Old Masters where assistants did the painting under the Master's eye...and the work, with that of copying the Queen's portrait subsequently, lasted to the end of the reign' [124]. Fildes was

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122 L V Fildes, op.cit. p 103

123 L V Fildes, ibid, p 160

124 L V Fildes, ibid, p165-6

commissioned again for the State Portrait of George V in 1911, presumably involving copies and engravings as before. He was knighted in 1906, and created KCVO in 1918.

There is nothing to suggest that Fildes had any misgivings about his move to portraiture, and in any event, says L V Fildes, the move 'would not mean abandoning Realism as such; he [Luke] had very clear views as to that. The essential requirement in a portrait was that it should look like the sitter; if not, why have it painted? A poor likeness is no excuse for having "revealed" a sitter's inner character. Indeed, the capability of a portrait – a visual work of art – to represent something that was not perceptible to the naked eye was a matter my father regarded with suspicion'[125]. Two of his portraits are shown in figs.70 and 71[126]

As to modernism, L V Fildes suggests – and presumably this was his father's view also – that some kind of accommodation between a taste for Victorian painting and Impressionism and its successors might have been possible, but for Roger Fry, 'the leading art critic of his time' who proceeded to lambast all Victorian painters and their works:

> "England in the Nineteenth Century", [Fry] summed up, "had enjoyed a veritable debauch of trivial anecdotic picture-making such as the world has never seen before". That, and much else, in language of persuasive virulence, spread over a period of years, would have its effect, and the last two generations of British public have been brought up to think there is little in Victorian painting to be taken seriously. It was against a background of changing taste that the rest of my father's career was to be spent, without however any loss of his reputation in his lifetime[127].

This, of course, was only one side of the story – Fry was a champion of modern French painting, and the exhibition he organized in 1910 entitled 'Manet and the Post-Impressionists', had a profound effect on young British artists, among them the Bloomsbury

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125 L V Fildes, ibid, p 103.

126 Sir Frederick Treves was the surgeon who operated on Sir John Millais, then President of the Academy, in his last illness.

127 L V Fildes, op.cit. pp 156-7

group. But the undermining of the British School, encompassing genre, narrative and realism, did not begin with Fry. Monet had painted *Impression: Sunrise* in 1872, and five years later Whistler followed with *Black and Gold: The Falling Rocket* at the Grosvenor Gallery in London. The Grosvenor was a venue associated with the Aesthetic Movement advocating 'Art for Art's Sake', which began as a literary movement in France. It was this painting which Ruskin famously and offensively described as 'flinging a pot of paint in the public's face', and which led to the equally famous libel trial which Whistler won, though bankrupted. But Whistler was an eloquent advocate of Art for Art's Sake, arguing that:

> As music is the poetry of sound, so is painting the poetry of sight, and the subject matter has nothing to do with harmony of sound or of colour...Art should be independent of all clap-trap – should stand alone, and appeal to the artistic sense of the eye and the ear, without confounding this with emotions entirely foreign to it, as devotion, pity, love, patriotism and the like[128]

This was a potent argument which contributed powerfully, and at quite an early date, to the eventual triumph of modernism.

Meanwhile, if the world of painting known by Fildes, Herkomer and Holl was being 'unmade' by these forces, the world of pictorial journalism was also being 'unmade' (and remade) by the 'photomechanical revolution'. The last decades of the nineteenth century changed that industry for ever, reducing or eliminating the opportunities formerly enjoyed by the black-and-white illustrators. Van Gogh, too, initially so influenced by the Victorian illustrators, was to embrace a quite new kind of art in France, which Fry came to label 'Post-Impressionism'. In this way, ironically, he participated in the downfall of Victorian 'social-realism'[129].

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[128] Whistler J, op.cit. Quoted in *ODNB*

[129] Van Gogh's use, in the last year of his life, of a 'black-and-white' motif from his time in The Hague, is noteworthy. (figs.75 and 76). Perhaps, by 1890, it had become symbolic of his own suffering. But the black-and-white image is perhaps the more powerful of the two.

Figure 66. Holl, Frank, *Francis Holl*, National Portrait Gallery.

Available at: http://www.npg.org.uk

Figure 67. Holl, Frank, *Sir William Schwenk Gilbert*, National Portrait Gallery.

Available at: http://www.npg.org.uk

Figure 68. Herkomer, Hubert, *John Ruskin*, National Portrait Gallery.

Available at: http://www.npg.org.uk

Figure 69. Herkomer, *Hubert, Dinah Maria Craik*, National Portrait Gallery.

Available at: http://www.npg.org.uk

Figure 70. Fildes, Luke, *Alexandra of Denmark*, National Portrait Gallery.

Available at: http://www.npg.org.uk

Figure 71. Fildes, Luke, *Sir Frederick Treves*, National Portrait Gallery.

Available at: http://www.npg.org.uk

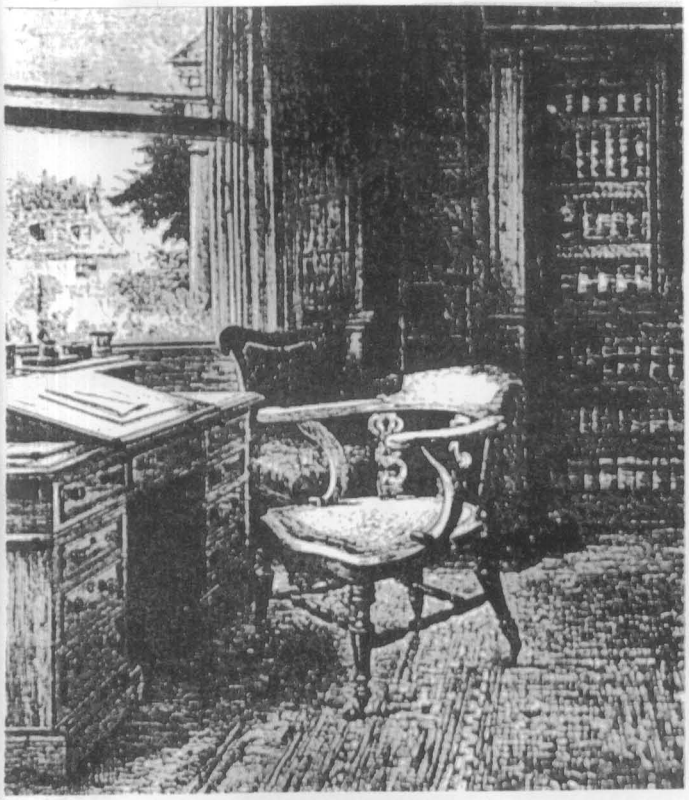

Fig.72. Fildes, Luke, *The Empty Chair* (detail), (Dickens's Chair), Christmas 1870, *Graphic.*

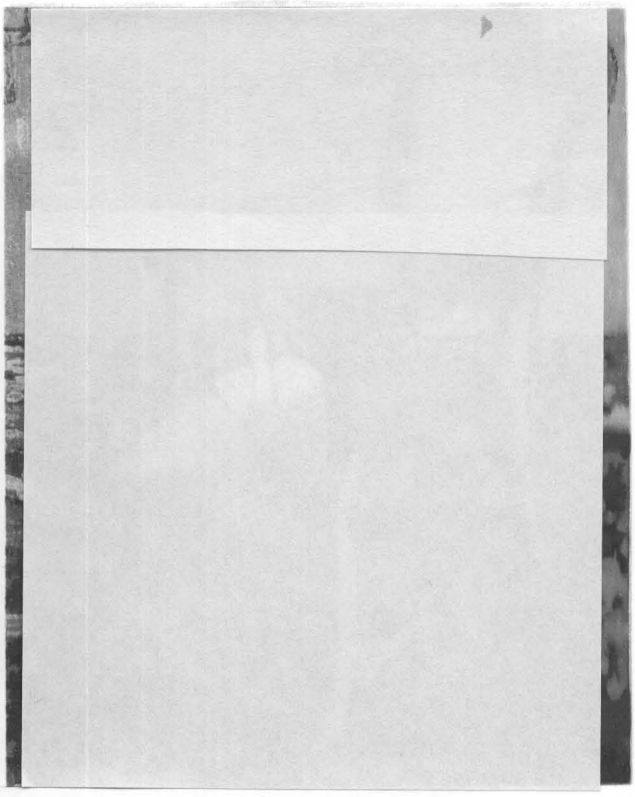

Fig.73. Van Gogh, Vincent, *Gauguin's Chair,* Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam, 1888

Fig.74. Fildes, Luke, 'Sleeping it Off', in Charles Dickens's *The Mystery of Edwin Drood,* 1870.

Figure 75. Van Gogh, Vincent, *At Eternity's Gate*, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, 1882.

Available at: http://www.rijksmuseum.nl

Figure 76. Van Gogh, Vincent, *Sorrowing Old Man*, Kröller-Műller Museum, Otterlo, 1890.

Available at: http://www.kmm.nl

CHAPTER 5 'REALISM' AND 'SOCIAL REALISM'

It is necessary at this stage to allude, however briefly, to a number of issues which bear on 'realism' and 'social-realism' as terminology and labelling. In one sense, the whole of Western art until modern times has been 'realist', from the cave paintings of Lascaux onwards, in a way that Islamic art, for example, has not. All artists have sought in one way or another to convey their ideas through the language of reference to the real world, however idealized their representations might have been. Today, the term is often associated with paintings of the sixteenth-century Dutch School, with some by Velazquez and Murillo in Spain, and by Millet and Courbet in France – with whom 'realism' became 'Realism' and the paintings enlarged to History painting size. This art is characterised by the choice of everyday subjects rendered in a more or less objective, non-idealized manner. The term 'social-realism' on the other hand, is applied in the main to art movements of the twentieth century, and is taken to imply some added element of protest against social, political or economic conditions.

There are difficulties at various levels with the use of these terms. Magritte has demonstrated in his *La Trahison des Images* (fig.77) that his painting of a pipe 'n'est pas une pipe', that is, it is simply an arrangement of paint on a canvas[130]. Moreover, Magritte's painting uses text to make its point (as is still done in some modernist paintings) and it is a question whether any painting supposedly intending to convey a message can fully make its point without literary help, either within the painting, or around the frame or in the catalogue (all these methods, as has been seen, were used in Victorian times). There are also post-modern arguments as to the impossibility of conveying messages in art (or in any other medium)

[130] The philosopher Michel Foucault discusses this painting in his *This is not a Pipe*, trans. Harkness J, Berkeley, Univ.of Calif. (1973).

which remain undistorted, consciously or unconsciously, in the devising, or in the sending or the receiving. But the main question here is: how much are we entitled to 'read' in (or into) a painting, based on the artefact itself, and what is known of its creator?

Courbet may be taken as a test case. He was very much the political radical, who on that account was ultimately forced to live out his life in exile. His *The Stonebreakers* (1849) is an iconic work of French Realism, in which there is no compromise in rendering the brutal facts of hard labour, and no attempt to soften the impact with sentiment. These factors together might give us good reason to interpret his painting as social criticism, and therefore to label the painting as 'social-realism'. Yet Linda Nochlin comments:

> When we turn to Realist works themselves the connection between art and specific social attitudes becomes more amorphous. The precise degree to which Courbet's major paintings...actually reflect his left-wing political convictions is debatable. For his friend and supporter, P.-J. Proudhon, the anarchist, philosopher and coiner of the phrase 'property is theft'...*The Stonebreakers* might indeed have been an 'irony directed against our industrial civilisation'...but it is unlikely that Courbet had any such overt propaganda in mind when he painted [it].[131]

There is a warning here concerning the interpretation of, and the labelling to be applied to, the 'social-realist' work of Fildes, Herkomer and Holl, who were never avowed radicals, and who appear indeed to have been carefully apolitical. Courbet for his part was sceptical about labels. In his 'Manifesto of Realism', entitled *Le Réalisme*, published for his exhibition in his Pavillon du Réalisme in Paris in 1855, he claimed that this title was imposed on him. He added, 'never have titles given an accurate idea of things, if it were otherwise, works would be superfluous'[132]. The same difficulty arises with the various art movements of the twentieth-century, usually (but not always) labelled 'social-realist', and perhaps in the end,

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[131] Nochlin L, Realism, Penguin (1971), p 46.

[132] Rubin J H, *Courbet*, Phaidon (1997), p 157

only a few artists of *Neue Sachlichkeit* in Weimar Germany can confidently be read as offering overt and unequivocal social criticism (figs.78 and 79)[133].

It may also be relevant to the intentions of Fildes and the others, that Victorian artists who were in fact socialists, did not attempt painting in a 'social-realist' manner. Walter Crane, for example, painted allegories of human life and destiny, but as 'artist for the cause' he produced posters, trade union banners and cartoons. His *Triumph of Labour*, for May Day 1891, is an example (fig.80). Crane's friend and fellow-socialist, William Morris pursued his socialist goals through a whole range of creative work in the Arts and Crafts movement and in writing, but his limited output in painting was not of the social-realist kind.

[133] The work of George Grosz may be cited: see his *Official for the Relief of War Wounded*, later titled *Grey Day* (1921), and *Pillars of the Community*, of 1926 (figs.78 and 79)

Figure 77. Magritte, Reneé, *La Trahison des Images*, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 1928-29.

Available at: http://www.lacma.org

Figure 78. Grosz, George, *Grey Day* (*originally Official for the Relief of War Wounded*), 1921.

Available at: http://www.smb.spk-berlin.de

Figure 79. . Grosz, George, *Pillars of the Community*, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin-Preussicher Kulturbesitz Nationalgalerie, 1926.

Available at: http://www.smb.spk-berlin.de

Figure 80. Crane, Walter, *The Triumph of Labour*, Museum of Labour History, 1891.

Available at: http://www.unionhistory.info

CONCLUSION

The Introduction to this dissertation raised a number of related issues. Were there 'many' 'social-realists' in Victorian art, or should this label be applied only to Luke Fildes, Hubert Herkomer and Frank Holl? Should it, indeed, be applied even to them, and if so, should they be condemned as apostates for having abandoned this mode for portraiture? These questions carry within them others concerned with the term 'social-realism' itself, and with moral as much as artistic judgements of these three artists.

In considering these issues, it has been pointed out that 'social-realism' in its usual connotation implies a degree of social criticism, that it has typically been applied to various art movements of the twentieth century (while acknowledging its origins in the French Realism of Millet and Courbet), and that it has been applied only retrospectively to the work of Fildes, Herkomer and Holl. It has also been pointed out that the defining characteristic of 'social-realism' – that it should imply an element of social criticism – is inherently difficult to detect with confidence in any art work unadorned with literary reference.

In the review undertaken of paintings across the Victorian period, it has been possible to demonstrate without doubt the existence of a 'sub-stream of social concern', and in Fildes, Herkomer and Holl this is expressed with a greater degree of forceful realism than was apparent earlier in the century. Yet even in the 'social-realist' work of these three artists, it has had to be concluded that there is often ambiguity in the 'message' to be derived.

In an attempt to throw further light on the work of these artists, and on their reasons for abandoning this mode of painting, consideration has been given to their artistic inheritance,

to the social and professional context in which they lived, and to their own personalities and experience.

In regard to artistic inheritance, Hogarth was clearly a major influence, carried through into Victorian times not least in a burgeoning pictorial journalism which gave rise to the *Graphic*, and hence to the emergence of these three as painters. The nature and quality of this pictorial journalism in its more immediate influence, has also been considered (separately in Appendix I), with particular reference on the one hand to a number of radical journals, including *Punch*, and on the other to the *Illustrated London News* (*ILN*) and the *Graphic*. It has been concluded that these two journals survived by offering a variety of material appealing to a middle-class readership, some small part of which dealt with social problems, though generally from a liberal or neutral standpoint. The journals with an overtly radical agenda did not survive, while *Punch* survived having changed from a radical to a more conservative stance.

A major element in the *Graphic's* success, however, was the quality of its illustration, which its proprietor influenced strongly in the direction of immediacy and realism. This clearly had an important formative effect on his artists, but Thomas had no discernable radical agenda, and there is nothing to suggest he passed on such an agenda to the young Fildes, Herkomer or Holl.

In regard to 'context', it has been shown (separately in Appendix II), that Victorian society had many problems, in the later period particularly in London, that much attention and publicity was given to them, and that consequently Victorian artists are unlikely to have been unaware of the opportunities for depiction of 'social-realist' subjects. As has also been

shown, there was some response to this, though intermittently, and most notably by Fildes, Herkomer and Holl. But mid to late Victorian society offered the artist glittering prizes, including a path to gentlemanly status for themselves and their families, which all three of these artists achieved. But once achieved, this status had to be maintained. When the market came to demand portraits, and these three found themselves supremely well able to supply that demand, the pressure to comply, as Harry Quilter so eloquently attested, was impossible to resist.

Fildes, Herkomer and Holl for their part, appear to have had few qualms about moving to portraiture, which they considered had noble lineage in European painting, and a legitimate function in recording the eminent of the age. In considering the 'moral' question, however, the 'charge' in this case is evidently the abandonment of a 'cause' for money. But as has been shown, Fildes, Herkomer and Holl never espoused a cause, either jointly or individually, or belonged to a defined artistic 'movement'. Moreover, the label 'social-realism' was applied to them retrospectively in the twentieth century. The 'charge' is therefore unsustainable. Their personal motivations were anyway not identical, though all had had problematic early lives, and were required to make their own way. Fildes was perhaps the most establishment-minded of the three, pursuing a career dominated by the Royal Academy, but Holl was driven by psychological demons, and Herkomer by his not ignoble dreams of Lululaund. Nonetheless, these three artists did produce a small number of paintings which deal with the grimmer aspects of the human condition in a more powerful, direct and unadorned way than had been done before, which say at the least that 'these are your fellow human beings, deserving of your concern and respect'. For this, they themselves deserve respect.

Finally, and more generally, these artists were ‘of their times’. Their careers, and the ‘social-realist’ sub-genre, had a ‘making’ in social, economic and political conditions developing from the eighteenth-century, but there was also an ‘unmaking’, as all these conditions changed materially, and the country embarked on another ‘new age’, which had little time for the Victorians or their art.

APPENDIX I

The Rise of the Victorian Illustrated Periodical

The rise of the Victorian illustrated press had its origins in a complex of circumstances deriving from all three of those outstanding facts which made the Victorian age – dynamic population growth, industrialization and urbanisation[134]. Large populations concentrated in urban areas combined with rising levels of literacy provided potentially large and economically viable markets, while the introduction of mechanized paper-making and the steam-powered printing press enabled the rapid production of large print runs. The development of the postal service and railway network in turn made rapid distribution possible well beyond the metropolis. And crucially for present purposes, a new technique of engraving on the end-grain of hard boxwood could be exploited to produce illustrations incorporated with the letterpress. The efficiency of this method could be further enhanced by the process of stereotyping, in which the actual printing could be done from metal casts taken from the original set pages.

Thomas Bewick of Newcastle (1753-1828), is usually considered the founder of wood-engraving. He was 'the first to realize its full potentialities in the beautiful small vignettes of birds, animals and landscapes with which he illustrated the books he himself had written'[135]. (An example is shown, enlarged, at fig.81) Wood engraving was the only process of illustration available which could combine cheapness with abundance of detail, and it engendered a whole industry of engravers who could convert an artist's drawing into a block ready for printing. For large illustrations, the disadvantage of the small diameter of boxwood could be overcome by the use of composite blocks, the parts of which could be worked on separately by a number of engravers, then reassembled. This in turn encouraged the formation of large workshops, most notably those of the Dalziel brothers and Swain, in which engravers worked together. Jenny Uglow notes that Wordsworth admired Bewick's work, which he clearly felt chimed with his own aims in his *Lyrical Ballads*, 'to choose incidents and situations from common life, and to relate or describe them, throughout, as far as possible in a selection of language really used by men...'[136]

But despite the technical, economic and social conditions favourable to a great expansion of the publishing industry in the first part of the century, the stamp tax on newspapers, and the duty on paper kept prices high. Moreover, following the Peterloo massacre in Manchester in 1819, the government of Lord Liverpool had imposed the notorious Six Acts. Two of these were designed specifically to suppress a radical or working-class press. The stamp tax – the

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[134] Wolff M and Fox C, 'Pictures from the Magazines', p 559 and Note 1 in Dyos H J & Wolff M (eds), *The Victorian City, Images and Realities*, London, Routledge & Kegan Paul (1973)

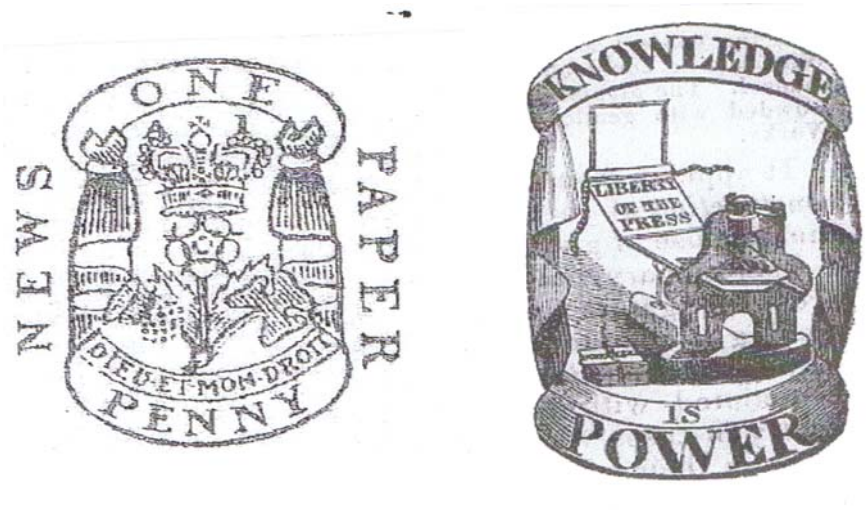
[135] Griffiths A, *Prints and Printmaking, An Introduction to the History and Techniques*, British Museum Press, 2000 p 24.

[136] Uglow J, *Nature's Engraver, A Life of Thomas Bewick*, Faber and Faber 2006, pp 310-13. Uglow notes that in an extra verse in the manuscript version [of a rhyme *The Two Thieves* in tribute to Bewick] Wordsworth wrote:

> Oh! Now [sic] that the boxwood and graver were mine
> Of the Poet who lives on the banks of the Tyne
> Who has plied his rude tools with more fortunate toil
> Than Reynolds e'er brought to his canvas and oil.

'Tax on Knowledge' – was not new, and had already been raised to 4d in 1815, but under the new legislation, many periodicals previously exempt were now brought within the definition of a newspaper, making such papers prohibitively expensive for a mass readership. Additionally, the law on blasphemy and sedition was strengthened[137].

The effect of these measures was to drive the radical press underground, or at any rate to defy the law, in the 'war of the Great Unstamped'. In the forefront of this war, though by no means alone, was the *Poor Man's Guardian*, published weekly by Henry Hetherington from 1831 to 1836, price 1d. The *Guardian* was involved in all the radical causes of the day, campaigning not only for removal of the Stamp Tax, but also for trade union organisation and for universal suffrage. It was, however, centrally important in the struggle for a free press, which in turn would pave the way for great expansion of the publishing industry. And though it did not carry illustrations, The *Guardian* did carry on the front page a highly potent 'logo' – a 'mock' version of the official stamp which had to be affixed to all 'stamped' publications to signify payment of the tax.



The official stamp (left), and the mock version (right), both enlarged.
(see also fig.82)

This 'war of the Great Unstamped' was an extraordinary episode, involving hundreds of prosecutions and imprisonments of agents and publishers (including Hetherington), and confiscation of printing presses, but such was the resilience of this clandestine press, and its damaging effect on the 'stamped' variety, that the government had eventually to concede defeat. The Stamp Tax was reduced to 1d. in 1836, but not abolished until 1855. The Paper Duty was abolished in Gladstone's budget of 1861.

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[137] The Newspaper Stamp Duties Act (60 Geo III cap.9) states, 'Whereas Pamphlets and printed Papers containing Observations upon Public Events and Occurrences, tending to excite Hatred and Contempt of the Government and Constitution of these Realms as by Law established, and also vilifying our holy Religion, have lately been published in great Numbers, and at very small Prices; and it is expedient that the same should be restrained... (Quoted in Hollis P, Introduction to *Poor Man's Guardian* (Reprint), 2 volumes, Merlin Press 1969, p xiii

But the *Guardian* itself did not survive. It faced difficulties of various kinds, and finally, in 1835, Hetherington's new printing machine was seized and destroyed for breach of an obscure registration clause, and shortly afterwards, he decided to cease publication[138]. An illustrated paper of the same title appeared in 1847, published by Charles Cochrane, president of the Poor Man's Guardian Society. It campaigned on social issues such as reform of the Poor Law, but survived for only eight issues[139].

The first successful illustrated periodical to take advantage of the growing market and the new technology was the *Penny Magazine*. Nominally sponsored by the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge (SDUK), it was published by Charles Knight from 1832 until 1845. The magazine contained nothing which could cause official anxiety and did not attract the Stamp Tax. Its early success was phenomenal, and thanks to the scope for multiplication of stereotype casts, it had an international dimension, with sales into Europe and the United States[140]. By the end of 1832, its circulation has reached an unprecedented 200,000, from which Knight estimated an actual readership of 1 million. (The circulation of the *Poor Man's Guardian* at this time was at most 15,000). Knight's aims for the magazine are described by Anderson as follows:

> It was... a mission into the field of popular education. Like most members of the SDUK and many other reformers of the time, [Knight] was worried about worker unrest and the potential threat to social stability of the radical press. Even more, he deplored the generally poor quality of literature and imagery then available to working people...Thus at its outset he regarded the *Penny Magazine* partly as an antidote to the forces of social disruption and, above all, as a new medium for the dissemination of much needed general knowledge and diverse imagery[141].

In his first issue, Knight emphasizes his wish to reach a new readership 'whose time and whose means are equally limited...for these we shall endeavour to prepare a useful and entertaining Weekly Magazine...that may tend to fix the mind upon calmer, and, it may be purer subjects of thought than the violence of party discussion, or the stimulating details of crime and suffering[142]'.

The paper did indeed strive to provide its audience - probably by no means wholly working class - with improving information and high quality images of works of art. The information seems, however, to have been highly selective, and the art works very often to have been used for moralizing commentary.

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[138] Hollis P, ibid, pp xxi-iii

[139] Fox C, 'The Development of Social Reportage in English Periodical Illustration during the 1840s and Early 1850s',in *Past and Present*, No. 74, (Feb 1977) pp 107-9.

[140] Knight C, 'The Commercial History of a Penny Magazine', reprinted from *The Penny Magazine*, 2 (1833) in King A & Plunkett J (eds), *Victorian Print Media – A Reader*, OUP (2005) pp 126-35.

[141] Anderson P, *The Printed Image and the Transformation of Popular Culture 1790-1860*, Clarendon Paperbacks, Clarendon Press, Oxford (1994) p 53.

[142] 'Reading for All', *Penny Magazine*, 31.3.32, p 1.

In the matter of information, examples from the *Penny Magazine's* coverage of conditions in the mines and factories may be cited. Both examples are from the 1830s, before publication of the *Report of the Inquiry into the Employment and Conditions of Children in the Mines and Manufactures* in 1842 ('The Children's Report'). This Report was to cause a sensation through its exposure of the conditions under which children worked, and those conditions are unlikely to have been better a few years earlier. In 1833, The *Penny Magazine* published an article on 'A Well-Conducted Factory' in Bradford[143]. The article was at pains to point out that 'although there may be great abuses in many establishments', a description of this one should 'correct some of the prejudices which exist on the subject'. A description of a veritable childhood idyll follows. Similarly, early in 1835, the paper published lengthy illustrated articles on 'The Collieries' covering all aspects of the industry[144]. The only reference to child labour reads: 'Boys are found useful at a very early age – so early as seven – and are employed in opening trap doors, driving horses, propelling trucks, & etc'. Moreover, workers are shown in the illustrations working in seams twice their own height (very unlike the images which were to appear in the 1842 Children's Report)[145].

In the selection of art works, Fox points out that 'It was to Hogarth that the Victorians turned increasingly, both in art and literature, whenever they wanted to justify the depiction of vice rather than virtue, to teach through the illustration of bad rather than good example'[146]. This was certainly true of the *Penny Magazine*. As Anderson notes, 'The art works most frequently reproduced in the *Penny Magazine* were the engravings of William Hogarth. In 1834 and 1835 the magazine used a total of twenty-four such prints...[and] of all his works, his series *Industry and Idleness* was perhaps best suited to the magazine's concept of improvement through art', showing as it does the contrasting fates of the industrious and idle apprentices[147]. In this context it is interesting to note that the series was re-engraved, without cartouches etc, by the magazine's chief engraver, John Jackson, one-time apprentice to Thomas Bewick (fig.83).

In the early 1840s, however, two new illustrated magazines appeared which were destined to survive well into the twentieth century – the *Illustrated London News* (a weekly which began in May 1842, price 6d) and *Punch or the London Charivari* (also a weekly, which began in July 1841, price 3d). Both were purely commercial ventures. Wolff and Fox[148] are critical of the *Illustrated London News (ILN)*, on the grounds that despite its high-flown stated aims, its content avoided anything likely to be uncomfortable to a Victorian middle-class audience. They quote with approval Charles Knight's comment on the *ILN* in his memoirs:

> The scenery is varied; the actors are the same. Sometimes we have incidents that could never have been seen by the artists – ships foundering – mines exploding. The

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143 *Penny Magazine,* 16.11.1833, p 104

144 *Penny Magazine,* articles published in 2 monthly supplements, 28.2 – 31.3.1835, and 31.3 – 30.4.1835.

145 It must be noted that the veracity of these images, or at any rate the extent to which they could be taken as representative of actual conditions, was strongly challenged at the time (see further below).

146 Fox, op.cit. p 103

147 Anderson P, op.cit. pp 61-7

148 In their joint work (op.cit.) and in Fox's separate work (op.cit)

> staple materials for the steady-going illustrator to work most attractively upon are, Court and Fashion; Civic Processions and Banquets; Political and Religious Demonstrations in crowded halls; Theatrical Novelties; Musical Meetings; Races; Reviews; Ship launches –every scene, in short, where a crowd of great people can be got together, but never, if possible, any exhibition of vulgar poverty[149].

There is truth in Knight's description, and certainly some mismatch between the *ILN's* aspirations and its performance, if one considers, for instance, the following, on 'Our Principles':

> ...It will thus be seen, that in the course of the career that we propose to ourselves, three essential elements of discussion will be the Poor Laws, the Factory Laws, and the working of the Mining System in those districts of our soil which nature has caverned with her treasures and cruelty disfigures with its crime...there is no sin so shameless but it may be brought to shudder in the sun – there is no wrong so strong in its deformity but it may be withered by the people's breath... [150]

These principles may have been those of the *ILN's* first editor, Frederick Bayley, though perhaps only partially those of its proprietor, Herbert Ingram (1811-1860). Ingram was a brilliant entrepreneur and publicist. He formed the ambition to start a newspaper, and noticing his customers' interest in London news, particularly when accompanied by illustrations, he saw an opportunity and took it. His enterprise was to be richly rewarded.[151].

How, then, should the *ILN* be regarded – did it merely reflect the narrow tastes of a middle class market accurately assessed by a shrewd businessman or, if it had higher aspirations, how far did it meet them? How far did its illustrations reflect actuality, or illustrations and text together really deal with the social concerns of the day?

Much fun has been had in contemplating the illustration on page one of issue one of the *ILN*, entitled *View of the Conflagration of Hamburg from the Alster* which used a stock engraving with fire added[152]. Williamson says that most of the news in the early *ILN* was like this. John Gilbert, for example, would be sent a set of wood blocks and a newspaper cutting, and would produce imagined 'illustrations' on the wood for engraving, in an hour. Dickens satirizes this kind of procedure in *Bleak House*, on the occasion of Krook's death by Spontaneous Combustion:

> Then, there comes the artist of a picture newspaper, with a foreground and figures ready drawn for anything, from a wreck on the Cornish coast to a review in Hyde

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149 Wolff and Fox ibid p 563, from Knight C., op.cit. III, pp 246-7

150 *ILN,* 21.5.1842

151 *ODNB* (2004). It should be noted, however, that Ingram was a many-sided personality. He became Liberal MP for Boston, campaigned for social reform and promoted improvement schemes in Boston and elsewhere.

152 Williamson C N, *Illustrated Journalism in England: Its Development, I,* Magazine of Art (1890) p 297

> Park, or a meeting at Manchester...he then and there throws in upon the block Mr Krook's house, as large as life; in fact, considerably larger...[153]

But this situation greatly improved over time, particularly when the paper faced much increased competition after the removal of the paper tax in 1861, and from the *Graphic* from its inception in 1869[154].

As to the *ILN*'s social reportage, Wolff and Fox consider its record in relation to the performance of certain other publications (to be looked at below) in covering specific episodes of social concern – child labour in the mines and factories, the Andover workhouse scandal and the Irish potato famine. In all three cases, they charge the *ILN* with either avoiding the issue or treating it inadequately. There is, however, a case to be made on the other side, or at least in mitigation, particularly if one takes into account, as one surely must, the text as well as the illustrations.

In the case of the Children's Report (1842), the *ILN* is said to have failed to drag the subject 'into a broader and brighter daylight' as it had promised. In the case of the Irish famine, it is conjectured that, in one instance, the *ILN* artist may have got no further than Liverpool in his quest for his subjects. And in the Andover case, the *ILN* is accused of responding too late, and then only with two isometric drawings of the exteriors of workhouses, one of that at Andover, and the other of a much more attractive one still to be built elsewhere.

But this is not the whole of the matter in any of these cases. It seems clear, in the first place, that Ingram did campaign for the abolition of child labour in the mines (see fig 84, an impression used in his campaign, of a young boy on his knees hauling a truck)[155]. Secondly, in the case of the Irish famine, it can be disputed whether the illustrations are factual, though the one Fox refers to as 'Chevane's Hut' (actually Cluvane's Hut) seems factual enough (fig.85). The accompanying text, however, reproduces in detail reports by the *Times*, which leave no doubt as to the wretched condition of the Irish peasantry, in one place after another[156]. And in the Andover case, though it appears that the *ILN* did respond late, the two drawings were not the whole of its report. In fact, the accompanying text amounts to a trenchant attack, in part on the inadequate design of the Andover workhouse, and in part on the administration of the then Poor Law Commissioners.[157]

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153 Dickens C, *Bleak House,* first pub.1853, Penguin Classics (2003), p 532.

154 Mason Jackson, Head of the *ILN* Art Department, gives a general account in his article, *Thirty Years of Pictorial Journalism*, *ILN*, 14.5.1892. Jackson joined the *ILN* at about the time the paper tax was removed. The paper 'had then been in existence eighteen years, and what competition it had met with had died out. Satisfied with the prosperity that attends an established reputation, the paper was disinclined to leave the groove in which it had achieved success...' The paper had also to adjust to changed circumstances in the absence of Herbert Ingram (d. 1860).

155 Reproduced on http://www.spartacus.schoolnet.co.uk/Jillustrated.htm.

156 *ILN* 10.1.1846. It may be added that the *ILN* contained many other items of reportage bearing on distress and famine in Ireland, throughout 1846. A later report, of 5.1.1850, 'Condition of Ireland – Illustrations of the New Poor Law' carried illustrations of dereliction, and one of 'The Widow Connor and her Dying Child', in a hovel bereft of all furniture.

157 *ILN* 7.11.1846

It seems, therefore, that although the *ILN's* coverage was indisputably for the most part of the kind Charles Knight outlined, it did not wholly ignore social issues, and when it did report or comment on them, it did so from a liberal standpoint. It is argued in Chapter 2 of the main text that this was in general terms the formula adopted by the *Graphic* from its inception in 1869. Meanwhile, it is necessary to notice, if briefly, *Punch* and a number of lesser illustrated magazines which appeared at certain stages and lasted for varying periods, and which, in contrast with the *ILN*, dealt more prominently and radically with social issues.

Punch, for its part, came into being following discussions involving Henry Mayhew (already discussed). Also involved were Douglas William Jerrold,[158], and John Leech, who would emerge as one of the paper's leading illustrators. After early financial difficulties, *Punch* was acquired by Bradbury and Evans, printers and publishers, who also published Dickens and Thackeray. With Dickens, what came to be known as the 'Punch Brotherhood' shared radical views, and the paper campaigned in the 1840s on the then radical causes: against the New Poor Law, and in support of the Chartists' political aims.

In 1843, *Punch* published Thomas Hood's *Song of the Shirt*, alluded to earlier. Also in 1843, John Leech began a series of illustrations satirizing the new murals in Westminster Hall, labelling his illustrations 'Cartoon No. 1, 2' etc., giving a new meaning to that term – 'a large satirical print'. Cartoon No.5 of the series, illustrated here (fig.88) entitled 'Capital and Labour' is perhaps one of the most trenchant and memorable political 'cartoons' published in this period. The paper's accompanying and highly ironic leader, written by Jerrold, read in part as follows:

> It is gratifying to know that although there is much misery in the coal-mines, where the 'labourers are obliged to go on all-fours like dogs'*, there is a great deal of luxury results from it... Punch's artist has endeavoured to do away with the disagreeable impression, by showing the very refined and elegant result that happily arises from the labours of these inferior creatures....* from Mr Horne's Report. [*Punch* footnote].

Horne's Report is mentioned further below

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Into the 1850s, Punch could still draw attention to social evils or produce radical comment (figs.89 and 90), but from then on, the paper lost its radical edge, moving gradually to a conservative stance. The English poor came to be depicted on the whole with a tolerant, amused condescension, while the Irish, against the background of long-running civil unrest in that country, were more and more depicted with menacing 'simian' characteristics (figs.91 and 92)[159]. Finally, Leech's Cartoon No. 5 of 1843 may be compared with a very different impression of 'Capital and Labour' which appeared in the much-changed political conditions of the early twentieth century (fig.93).

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[158] Douglas William Jerrold (1803-57). His son (William) Blanchard Jerrold (1826-84), was the author of *London Pilgrimage*, illustrated by Gustave Doré.

[159] Curtis Jr. L.Perry, *Apes and Angels: The Irishman in Victorian Caricature*, rev.ed. Smithsonian Institution Press, Washington and London (1997).

A number of other left-inclined journals appeared in the 1840s and later, though most were short-lived. Douglas Jerrold's paper, the *Illuminated Magazine*, a monthly, was publisher of Horne's report (referred to above). The report was an eight-page summary of the findings of the Children's Report of 1842. It included images of mine-working conditions taken from the Commission's report, and it will be seen from the specimen page (fig.94) that Leech has used these images in his Cartoon No.5. Horne had been one of the investigators on the Commission, and his findings were an influence on Elizabeth Barrett Browning in her poem *The Cry of the Children* (1844), which begins 'Do ye hear the children weeping, O my brothers...' [160]

Ingram also became involved in two other publications, the *Pictorial Times* (1843-8), and the *Illustrated Times* (1855-72). The *Pictorial Times*, a weekly price 6d, was founded by Henry Vizetelly and Andrew Spottiswoode, the Queen's printer. The stated aims of the paper were to 'eschew party politics and to consider only the POLITICS OF THE HUMAN HEART [caps as given]'[161]. Hood's *Bridge of Sighs* first appeared in the *Pictorial Times*, and in practice, the paper pursued radical causes. It reported in detail on the situation in Ireland, and attacked the New Poor Law over the Andover case, certainly more vigorously than the *ILN*, which nonetheless did, as discussed, take broadly the same political line. Vizetelly soon severed connection with the *Pictorial Times*, and in 1845 it fell into the hands of Herbert Ingram, only to fail, or become absorbed into the *ILN*, in 1848[162]. Ingram does not appear to have changed the political stance of the paper. The illustration of the interior of a workhouse at fig.95 is an example of the paper's concerns under Ingram, and it is noteworthy that it anticipates Herkomer's drawings for the *Graphic* and painting of the same subject at figs.51 and 53. Fig.95 is relatively crudely drawn, but is evidence of conditions more bereft of all comfort, in 1846, than those of Herkomer's time in the 1870s.

In 1855, with repeal of the Stamp Act expected imminently, Henry Vizetelly again entered the field in competition with the *ILN*, as editor of a new weekly, the *Illustrated Times*, a paper which came to present Ingram with a serious challenge. It attracted writers and illustrators of high quality, and was fortunate that the Crimean war raised demand for illustrations from the battlefronts. The *Illustrated Times* constantly scooped the *ILN*, and a circulation war ensued. Ingram eventually won control of the paper, lowering its quality to prevent competition with the *ILN*, in which state it lingered on until 1872.

The *Illustrated Times* was nonetheless always a radical paper, publishing articles and illustrations on the condition of the poor. The following examples may be noted. The first is from the paper's issue dated 28th February 1857 (before the coming of the Houseless Poor Act, 1864). Fig.96 shows the men's casual ward at the West London Union, on the occasion of a visit by the Lord Mayor. The accompanying article notes 'the place was totally destitute of either straw or bedding of any description whatever...the Lord Mayor and his friends next entered an adjoining cattle shed, where they found two destitute women huddled together on a rug, lying on the bare ground, almost perished with cold...Well might the Lord Mayor say, "If the poor were treated in such a way as that, was it not natural they should resort to *crime*

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160 *ODNB*, and *Victorian Poetry*, ed. O'Gorman F , Blackwell (2004), p 25

161 Preface to Vol. 1, page 1.

162 North J S, ed. *Waterloo Directory of English Newspapers and Periodicals 1800-1900*, North Waterloo Academic Press, Waterloo Ontario (1997)

rather than submit to it?"' A second illustration to this article (fig.97), shows a dormitory in a House of Correction visited by Henry Mayhew, and described by him in Part VI of his *Great World of London*[163] Further, in 1863, the paper published an article on 'The Condition of the Poor in Bethnal Green', accompanied by the illustrations at figs. 98 and 99, and in 1867 an article 'Relief of the Casual Poor' accompanied an illustration, 'Distress in London: Applicants for Relief Obtaining Tickets at a Police Station'(fig.100). This would be followed in December 1869 by Luke Fildes' 'Houseless and Hungry' in the new *Graphic* magazine. These two latter illustrations are compared in Chapter 3 of the main text.

It will be seen from the above selection of illustrated magazines which appeared in the thirty-year period from the eighteen-thirties to the eighteen-sixties, that it was the *ILN*, catering to a whole range of general interests, with in social and political affairs (as has been argued), a not illiberal slant, which remained the strongest and was to survive the longest. Those papers with a proselytising or radical agenda uppermost did not survive. And *Punch* survived, not coincidentally one must suppose, as it gradually lost its radicalism and took on the attitudes of a middle-class readership. It was against this background that William Luson Thomas (1830-1900) launched the *Graphic* (see Chapter 2 of the main text).

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[163] It is noteworthy that Jack London's description of the Whitechapel Workouse dormitory at the beginning of the twentieth century tallies exactly with this illustration:

> 'This was a long narrow room, traversed by two low iron rails. Between these rails were stretched, not hammocks, but pieces of canvas, six feet long and less than two feet wide. These were the beds, and they were six inches apart and about eight inches above the floor. The head was somewhat higher than the feet, which caused the body constantly to slip down. Being slung to the same rails, when one man moved, no matter how slightly, the rest were set rocking...'

London J, *The People of the Abyss*, 1st pub. 1903. This ed. Pluto Press, London (2001), p 55.

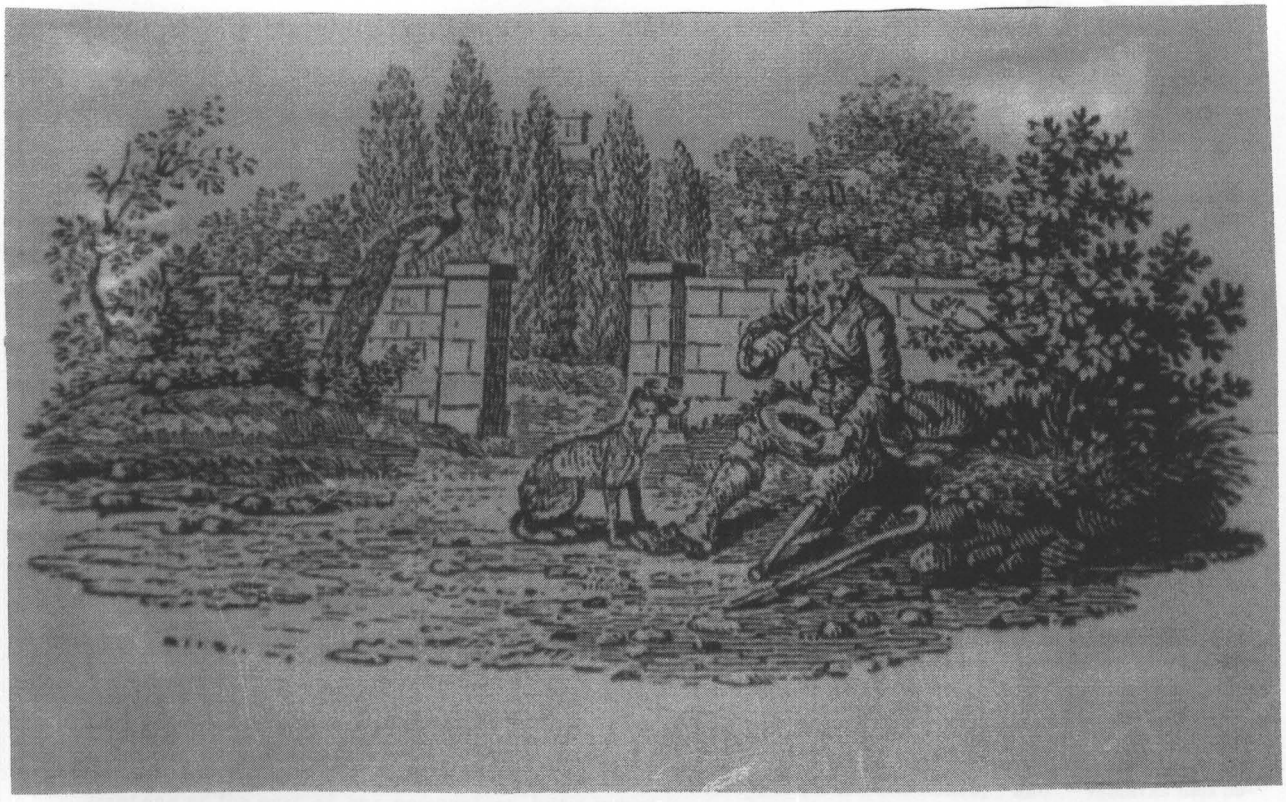


Fig.81. Bewick, Thomas, *The Beggar and his Dog, by the Rich Man's Gate*

THE

POOR MAN'S GUARDIAN.

ESTABLISHED, CONTRARY TO "LAW," TO TRY THE POWER OF "MIGHT" AGAINST "RIGHT."

No. 1. *Saturday, July* 9, 1831. [Price 1*d*.

Friends, Brethren, and Fellow-Countrymen,

OUR "*appeal*," as it is called—or rather the appeal of our friends—has turned out as we anticipated; —the conviction of Messrs. Birnie, Hall, and Robinson has been *confirmed*:—it has been decided by their "sapient worships," that distinct and nameless papers written by the same author, and published irregularly, form only one connected paper, bearing one and the same name, and published at stated periods—or, in fine, that the papers written by the "POOR MAN'S GUARDIAN," are within the meaning of *Castlereagh's Act*. Be it so; we wished to avoid "*the law*" as we would a very nuisance; we wished—though at great inconvenience—to keep as close as possible without actually trespassing on the common of which this act of tyranny has deprived us,—but we find it impossible; "the law" is made behind our backs—without our consent—kept secret from us—and when discovered, is unintelligible,—or, whether intelligible or not, it is to be interpreted by the *paid servants* of those who enforce it—and, consequently, escape from it is hopeless! Be it so, we say: we are prepared for the fight; it is a mere *legal* one on the part of our persecutors, but a *moral* one on ours; we know that we must suffer, but we are content to do so for the benefit of our fellow-creatures; we have before our eyes the fatal examples of all who have ever advocated the *truth*; but we shrink not from the worst, be our reward the cross of agony itself, on which Christ *expiated his* "SEDITION;" and be our doctrines, like his—pure and just as they are—rejected by all mankind; or, be they like his, only received to be distorted—even by those who profess the most to venerate them—into an authority for every species of rapacity and injustice—still we are prepared. Better—far better not to be, than be as we are! Yes, we buckle on our armour of patience and perseverance—we draw forth our sword of reason, and we brave the whole host of tyranny! Defiance is our only remedy;—we cannot be a slave in all: we submit to much—for it is impossible to be wholly consistent—but we will try, step by step, the power of RIGHT against MIGHT, and we will begin by protecting and upholding this grand bulwark and defence of all our rights—this key to all our liberties—THE FREEDOM OF THE PRESS—*the press, too, of the* IGNORANT *and the* POOR! we have taken upon ourselves its protection, and we will never abandon our post: we will *die* rather.

The fight is begun, and we must cast off the trammels both of disguise and fear; we cannot avoid the struggle, and we must meet it manfully:—no more *evasion*; we will not *trespass*, but deny the authority of our "lords" to enclose the *common* against us; we will *demand* our *right*, nor treat but with *contempt* the despotic "law" which would deprive us of it; we will trample it under our feet—and resist to the the last any *power* that may attempt to enforce it.

To you—friends and brethren—you whose cause we are advocating—whose rights we demand—whose liberties we defend—whose interests we espouse—to you we now appeal, not to let us fight our perilous battle singlehanded; we look to you for support; we ask you not to incur danger or expense—we desire not the risk of interests or person—we ask you merely to purchase, with your weekly pennies, and *read*, and *mark*, and *learn*, and *inwardly digest*, our "*newspaper*," to be called henceforward "THE POOR MAN'S GUARDIAN;" which will contain "*news, intelligence*, and *occurrences*," and "*remarks and observations thereon*," and "*upon matters in Church and State, tending, decidedly, to excite hatred and contempt of the Government and Constitution of the tyranny of this country, as* BY LAW *established*," and also "*to vilify the* ABUSES *of Religion*"—*and will be "printed in the United Kingdom, for sale, and published periodically" (every Saturday) "in yearly parts and weekly numbers, at intervals not exceeding twenty-six days, and will not exceed two sheets, and will be published for a less sum than Sixpence*" (to wit) the sum of ONE PENNY, "*exclusive of the duty imposed by the* 38 *Geo. III. c.* 78, *and the* 60 *Geo. III. c.* 9," or any other acts whatsoever, and despite the "laws" or the will and pleasure of *any tyrant* or *any body of tyrants* whatsoever, any thing hereinbefore, or any-where-else, contained to the contrary notwithstanding.

MIDDLESEX SESSIONS, *Saturday, July* 2.

(Before Francis Const, and seven or eight Magistrates.)

PENNY PAPERS.

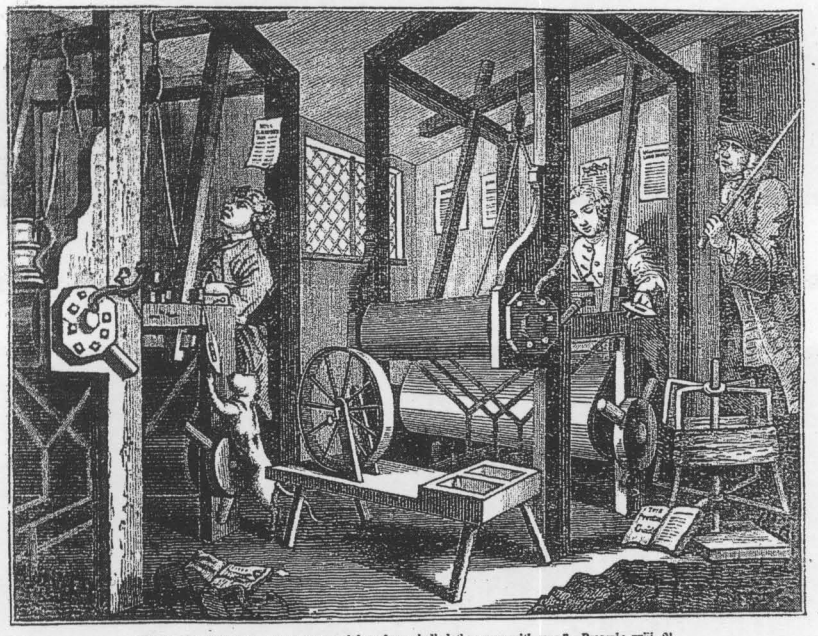
Henry Hetherington appealed against the conviction obtained by the Commissioners of Stamps before the PAID Magistrates of Bow-street Police-Office.

Fig.82. *The Poor Man's Guardian* – Issue No.1.

Monthly Supplement of
THE PENNY MAGAZINE
OF THE
Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge.

139.] April 30, to May 32, 1834.

HOGARTH AND HIS WORKS.—No. II.



"The drunkard shall come to poverty, and drowsiness shall clothe a man with rags."—*Proverbs*, xxiii., 21.
"The hand of the diligent maketh rich."—*Proverbs*, x., 4.

[Apprentices at their Looms.]

About the middle of the last century an old play, called 'Eastward Hoe,' was revived at Drury Lane Theatre; it had been previously published in Dodsley's 'Collection.' To this play it is said that Hogarth was indebted for the suggestion of the contrast between the courses of a faithful and virtuous, and a careless and vicious apprentice, which he has delineated in his series of prints called 'Industry and Idleness.' This is by no means improbable, although the painter's treatment of the subject is essentially different from that in the drama. 'Eastward Hoe,' which was the joint production of Ben Jonson, George Chapman, and John Marston, and was first published in 1605, is founded upon an entirely different state of manners from those which prevailed in the days of Hogarth—contrasting as much as the stuffed hose, the long-waisted doublet, and the high-peaked hat of the time of James I., contrasted with the square-cut coat, the long-flapped waistcoat, the periwig, and the buckles, of the time of George II. Before we proceed to our main object of describing this series of the works of Hogarth, it may not be uninstructive to furnish our readers with an introductory account of that remarkable and once formidable body,—the London apprentices.

To most readers the vivid and amusing description of the manners and habits of the London apprentices in early times, given by the pen of the 'Author of Waverley' in the 'Fortunes of Nigel' must be well known. The characters of Jin Vin and Frank Tunstall may be considered as no less correct than animated representations of the class to which they belonged. But it is not merely in works of fiction that we meet with frequent notices of the apprentices of London. The chronicles and other records of former times offer many particulars of the manners and conduct of a class of society which has long ceased to exist as a separate body. So entirely is this the case, that it may perhaps be to many persons a matter of surprise that they should ever have had that consequence which at one time they certainly possessed. This consequence was owing to several circumstances. It is well known that the custom which still exists of learning handicraft

Fig.83. 'The Penny Magazine', featuring Hogarth's *Industry and Idleness,* plate 1 of 12, the apprentices at their looms, 1834.

Fig.84. Image used by the *Illustrated London News* in a campaign against child labour in the mines.

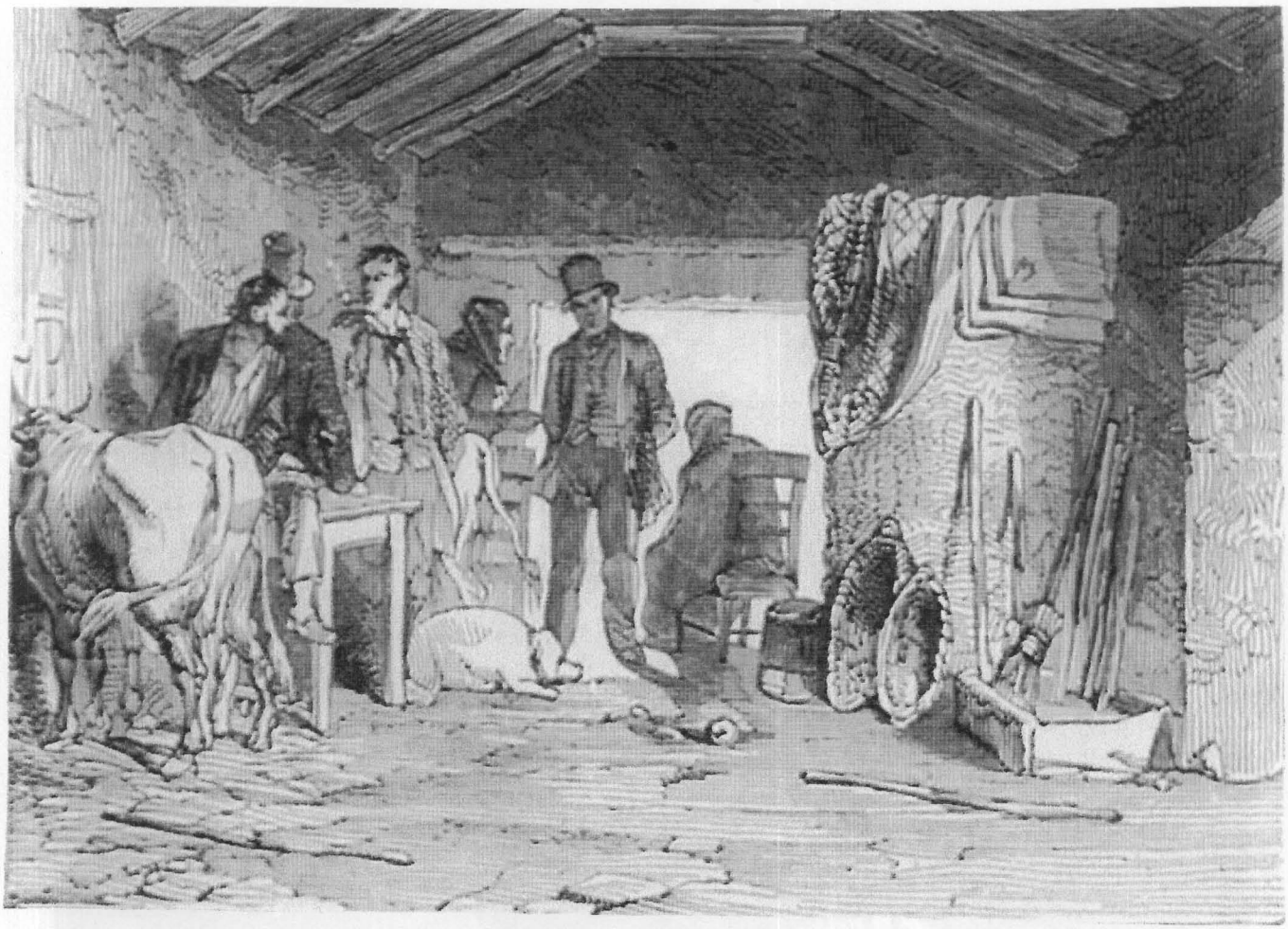


Fig.85. 'Cluvane's Hut'. *Illustrated London News*, 10.1.846. Conditions in Ireland.

Fig.86. Fitzgerald M, *A Pawn Office at Merthyr-Tydfil*, ILN 20.2.1875.

Fig.87. King, E.R, *Workman's Train,* ILN, 14.4.1883.

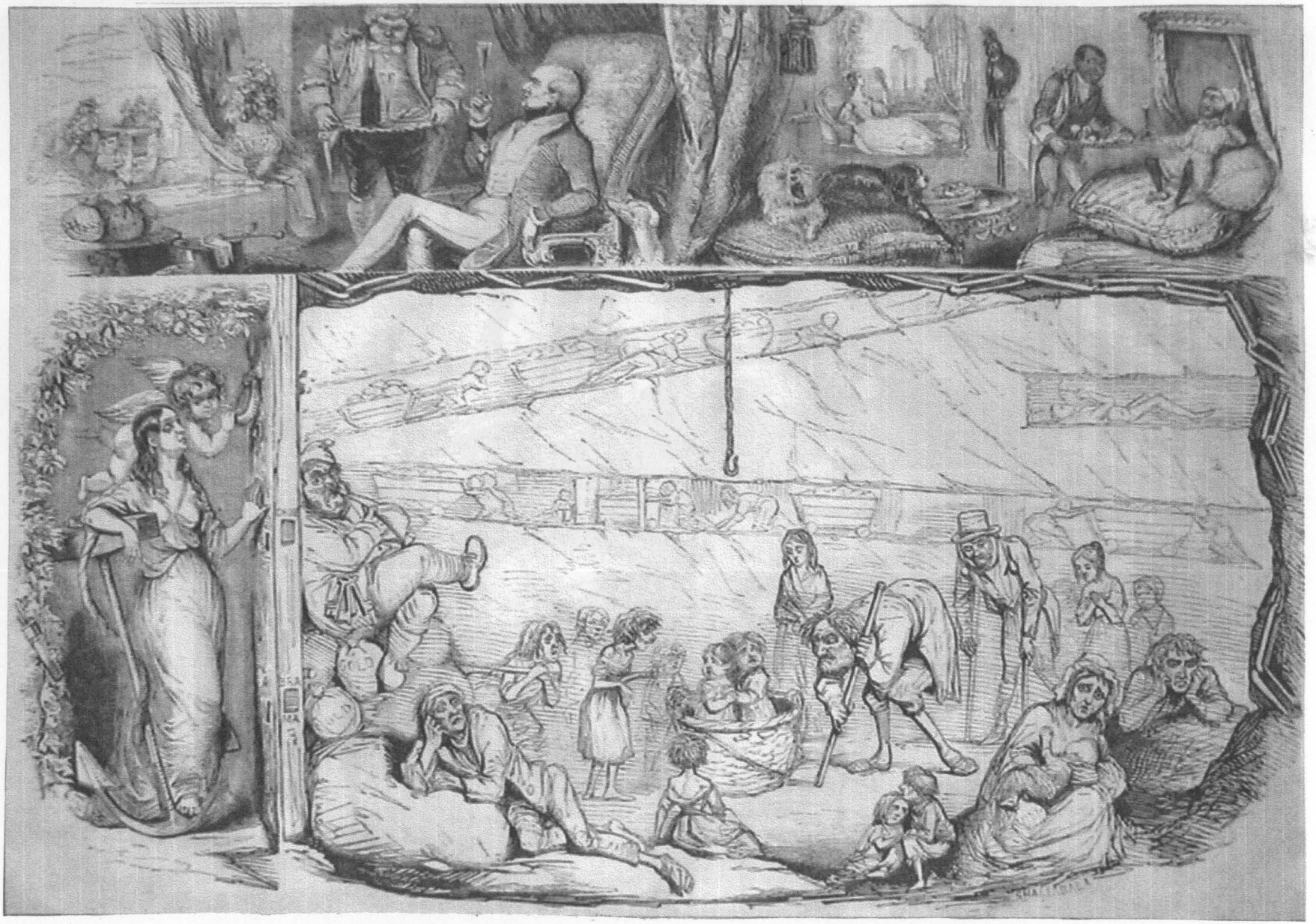


Fig.88. Leech, J, 'Cartoon No. 5 – Capital and Labour', *Punch* 1843

Fig.89. THE GREAT SOCIAL EVIL.

Time: Midnight. A Sketch not a Hundred Miles from the Haymarket.

Bella. "AH! FANNY! HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN *GAY*?"

Punch, xxxiii 114. 1857.

THE HOMELESS POOR.

"AH! WE'RE BADLY OFF—BUT JUST THINK OF THE POOR MIDDLE CLASSES, WHO ARE OBLIGED TO EAT ROAST MUTTON AND BOILED FOWL EVERY DAY!"

Fig.90. *Punch*, xxxvi, 35, 1859

TWO FORCES.

Fig.91. *Punch,* 29.10.1881

Wretched-looking Messenger: "Beg pardon, Mr. Brown, it's come at last! I'm *entirely* dependent on myself. My Wife's been and got a Separation Order!"

Fig.92. *Punch,* 9.7.1898

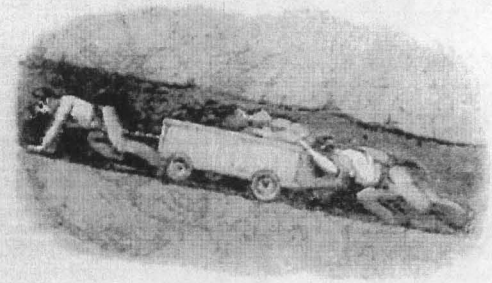
A WAITING CALL

Labour Party (to Capitalist) : "That's all right, guv'nor. I won't let him bite you."
(Aside, to dog) : Wait till you've grown a bit, my beauty, and you'll get a bigger mouthful!

Fig.93. *Punch,* 29.1.1908

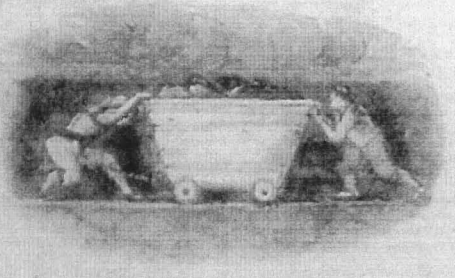
because it is graphic, not only because it is true, but to show that the wretched condition of these children was just the same 15 years ago and upwards (we know not how long), previous to the establishment of the recent Commission.

The next species of employment to which children are put in the mines, as soon as they are strong enough, is that of dragging the loaded corves from the workings to the foot of the shaft. In some districts this is done by fixing a girdle round the naked waist, to which a chain from the corve is hooked and passed between the legs, and the boys or girls crawl on their hands and knees, drawing the corve full of coal after them. This is called "drawing by girdle and chain." In other districts the same kind of work is done by pushing with the head and hands from behind. This is called "putting," or "hurrying." Sometimes both the above methods are combined, as in the following illustration.



The printed evidence of the children, taken from various districts, will show the severe pain which this mode of labour inflicts. They attest that the girdle and chain frequently rub the skin off them, make blisters "as large as shillings and half-crowns," and otherwise injure the boys and girls. They get no rest all day, unless for a few moments at a time, and in general "only when something is the matter with the engine." The *human* engine, it will be perceived, is treated without any such consideration, though there is continually something the matter with it. The galling modes of work are various:—

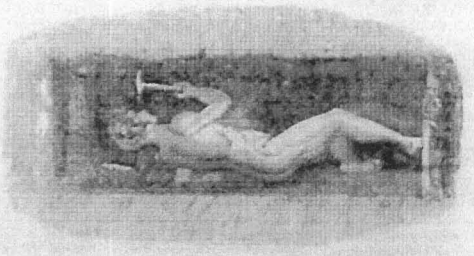
Katharine Logan, 16 years old, coal-putter:—"Began to work at coal-carrying more than five years since; works *in harness* now; draws backwards, with face to the tubs; the tugs and chains go under pit-clothes; it is o'er sair work, especially when we crawl." (Franks, Report and Evidence, App. Pt. II., p. 389.)



Rose Lomas, aged 12, Lund-head Green:—"Do you find it very hard work?—Yes. It is very hard work for a woman. I have worked seven years, and am as tired as I can be. I am so tired; and I felt very dull and stiff when I set off in the morning." (Kennedy, Evidence, No. 93; App. Pt. II., p. 231, l. 33.)—James Crabtree, aged 15, Mr. Dunson's, near Todmorden:—"Is it hard work for the lads in winter?—My brother falls asleep before his supper, and the little lass that helps him is often very tired." (Ibid. No. 215; p. 229, l. 11.)—Peter Gaskell, Mr. Lancaster's, near Worsley:—"Has four sisters, and they have all worked in the pits; one of them works in the pits now; she sometimes complains of the severity of her work. Three years ago, when they had very hard work, I used to hear her complain of the boils on her back, *and her legs were all eaten with the water*; she had to go through water to her work; she used to go about four or five o'clock in the morning, and stay till three or four in the afternoon, just as she was wanted; I have known her to be that tired at night that she would go to sleep before she had anything to eat." (Ibid. No. 29; p. 217, l. 36.)

North Lancashire Coal and Iron Mines.—Mr. Austin, after giving a deplorable picture of the labour of young children in the thin-seam mines, illustrates its effect by the words of the parents of some young workers. "I wish," one of them states, "you could see them come in; they come as tired as dogs, and throw themselves on the ground like dogs (here pointing to the hearthstone before the fire); we cannot get them to bed." (Austin, Report, § 11; App. Pt. II., p. 803.)

But whence, it will be asked, do all these poor boys and girls bring their heavy loads of coal? From the remote darkness of a low, narrow den, in the bowels of the mine, at a distance from the shaft, perhaps, of upwards of 1000 yards, perhaps of 200, perhaps 2000, and through a passage of not more than from 18 to 20 inches in height. At the end of this there is the gloomy den called a "facing," a "heading," a "working," or a "man's room;" and in that "room" lies the man at his work.



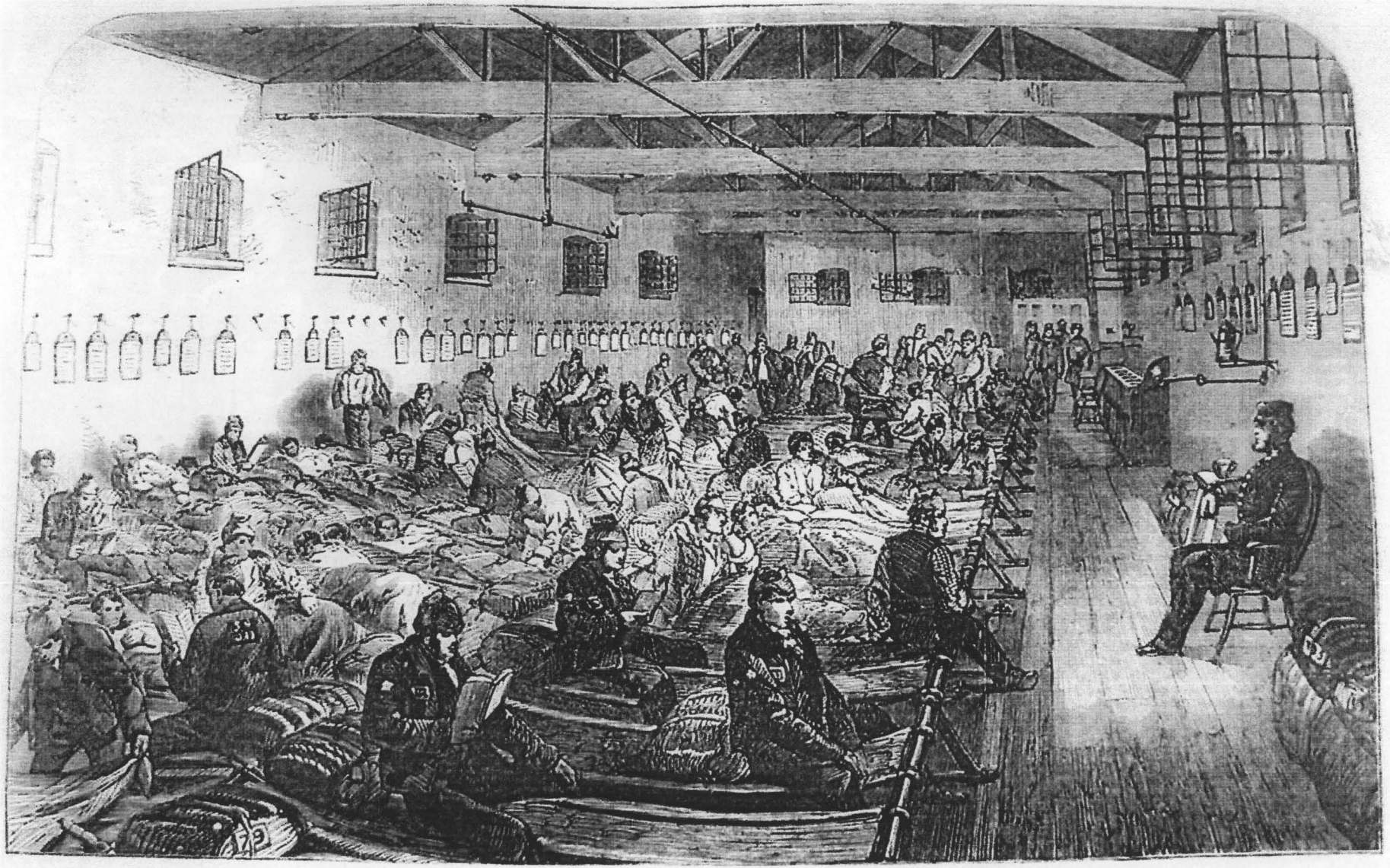
It has been seen, that a foolish lord has been angry at the sketches given by the Commission, and declared them to be exaggerations, and so forth. The following extract will show that many more startling sketches might have been made. There are abundant instances; they were not illustrated, but are not the words pictures?

Fig.94. Horne, R.H, 'Children's Employment Commission', *Illuminated Magazine*, 1843

Fig.95. 'Poor Law Imprisonment – the Union windows always look inwards, country prospects are exchanged for expansive views of the walls'. *Pictorial Times*, vii, 136-7, 1846.

MEN'S CASUAL WARD, WEST LONDON UNION.

Fig.96 *Illustrated Times*, 28.2.1857



THE DORMITORY AT THE HOUSE OF CORRECTION, COLDBATH FIELDS.

Fig.97. *Illustrated Times*, 28.2.1857

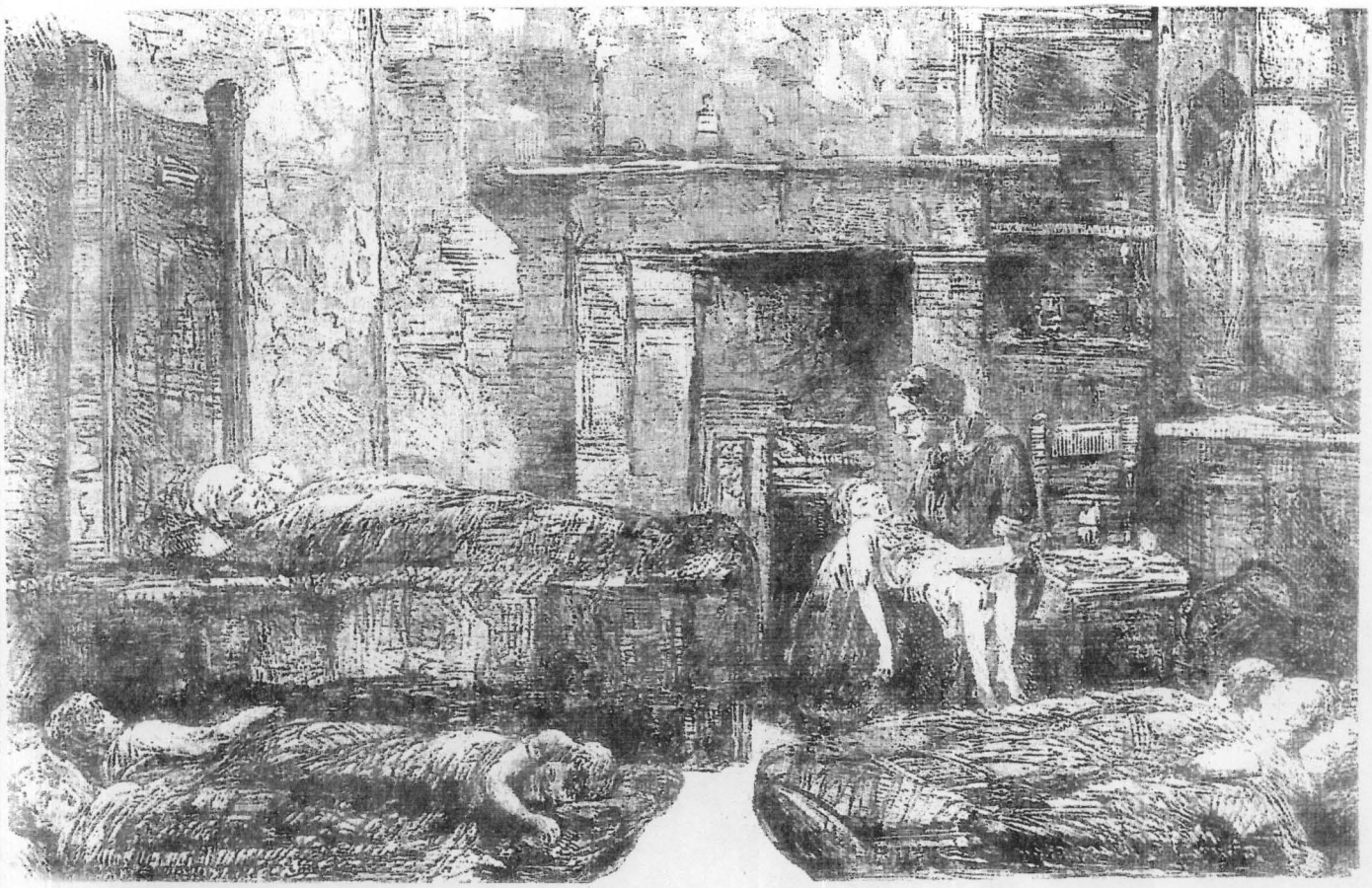


Fig. 98.Attic occupied by family of 10, Bethnal Green,
Illustrated Times, new series, iii 1863.

Fig. 99.Dwellings of the Poor in Bethnal Green,
Illustrated Times, new series, iii 1863.

Fig.100. Distress in London: Applicants for Relief Obtaining Tickets at a Police Station
Illustrated Times, 9.2.1867

APPENDIX II

Perceptions of and Reactions to Poverty in the Victorian Age

Three outstanding facts shaped the nature and development of the Victorian age – population increase, industrialisation and urbanisation. These developments brought with them over time vast increases in the national income and improvements in living standards, but also new social problems. Poverty and insecurity continued for many, often associated, particularly in the urban environment, with gross overcrowding and disease.

The New Poor Law was the major instrument of official policy confronting poverty and want throughout the Victorian era, but it can only be understood, in its principles and practice, in relation to the circumstances in the period immediately preceding Victoria's accession, and in the mind-set of its architects, who were determined above all to suppress pauperism and prevent, as they saw it, the demoralisation of the labouring poor.

That mind-set did not change greatly over time in those in authority in the New Poor Law, but attitudes did change gradually in society at large, towards a much wider view of poverty and its causes, and of society's responsibilities to the poor. As the economist Alfred Marshall put it to the Royal Commission on the Aged Poor in 1893: 'While the problem of 1834 was the problem of pauperism, the problem of 1893 is the problem of poverty.'[164]

The date 1834 is significant as the date of the Poor Law Amendment Act of that year. The 1834 Act amended the 'old' Poor Law dating back to Elizabethan times[165], and the impulse for new legislation came from a complex of problems concerned with the system of 'out-relief' under which wages were supplemented from the rates.[166] Alarm among the propertied classes at what they perceived as the mounting financial burden and deleterious moral effects of this system was compounded in 1830 by serious disturbances known as the 'Swing riots', sparked by the widespread introduction of threshing machines[167]. The riots were savagely put down, but the Poor Law also, it was felt, required urgent attention.

The outcome was the appointment of the Royal Commission of 1834, which rapidly produced a Report, the main tenets of which were equally rapidly enshrined in legislation. The mood of the Commissioners favoured draconian action, influenced by a variety of attitudes and social and economic theories then current, the net effect of which was to sanction *laissez-faire*, or non-intervention in the workings of the capitalist economy, but intervention - if necessary of the draconian kind - in the social field.

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[164] Harvie C and Matthew H C G, *Nineteenth Century Britain*, OUP 2000, p 137.

[165] Codified in the '43rd Elizabeth' of 1601. This was a statutory nation-wide system administered by the parishes. It was paid for by a compulsory poor rate, and provided workhouse or outdoor relief.

[166] This system was first introduced at Speenhamland, Berks., in 1795.

[167] A full account of the Speenhamland system, of its effects and of the 'Swing riots' (so named after the signature 'Captain Swing' on threatening letters sent to farmers) is given in Hobsbawm E J and Rude G, *Captain Swing*, Lawrence & Wishart, 1969.

In the event, their solution, enshrined in the Act, was to withdraw Poor Law provision in aid of wages, and to require Workhouse incarceration for the able-bodied pauper and his family, this on the principle of 'less eligibility', which meant that conditions inferior to those of the poorest independent worker would be imposed, with hard labour and strict discipline

Adaptation and change necessarily occurred over time, either by slow evolution, particularly in relation to the non-able bodied, or in response to the exposure of neglect or worse. An example of New Poor Law 'adaptation' in the case of vagrants or 'casuals' is noteworthy, in regard particularly to Luke Fildes's representations of them later in the *Graphic* and in painting. In the view of the Commissioners in 1841, 'These paupers do not, as a class, possess or deserve the compassion of the public'. Crowther describes their situation:

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> [They were] one rung below the able-bodied settled poor. If they applied for relief, they were entitled only to a night's lodging in the workhouse, but a lodging of the most primitive kind. When the New Poor Law was enacted, some Guardians assumed that, since casuals were not mentioned in it, there was no longer an obligation to relieve them. After a number of cases in which casuals died after being denied access to the workhouse, the Commissioners ordered Guardians to relieve all who applied, and to provide casual wards for their reception[168].

This kind of *ex post facto* response to a neglected situation occurred most notoriously in the Andover workhouse case of 1845, when it was discovered that starving paupers had fed on rotting bones. The scandal brought down the autonomous Poor Law Commission, and in 1847 it was replaced by a Poor Law Board headed by a Minister of the Crown.

At just this time, the nation was entering on what has been called 'The Age of Equipoise'[169], a period of unprecedented national prosperity combining economic success and social peace. But poverty for those at the lower end of the social order had not gone away. By this time, the focus of concern was shifting from the rural areas and the manufacturing towns to London, and in particular to the East End. There had been riots in the East End in 1859 and 1860, raising fears for social stability, and, says Stedman Jones, 'these were succeeded in the harsh winter of 1860-61 by a series of bread riots in various districts of the East End, accompanied by a virtual break-down of the machinery of poor relief throughout the area'[170].

From the general public, the response to these manifestations of poverty and to the inadequacies of the Poor Law had been private giving on a huge scale. But the response by those with power to influence events would set the pattern for charitable and Poor Law relief for the rest of the century. The answer to what was seen as indiscriminate charity was the

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[168] Crowther M A, *The Workhouse System 1834-1929*, Methuen (1983), pp 247 and 259. Images relating to this subject, in particular those of Luke Fildes in the *Graphic* and his subsequent Academy painting, are discussed in Chapter 3 of the main text.

[169] Burn W L, *The Age of Equipoise* (1964).

[170] Stedman Jones G, *Outcast London, A Study in the Relationship between Classes in Victorian Society*, Peregrine Books (1984), pp 241-2.

Charity Organisation Society (COS)[171]. In its ideology the COS, founded in London in 1869 (the date also of the founding of the *Graphic*), was at one with the Poor Law.

Conditions improved in the 1870s, but severe economic depression returned in the mid-1880s, bringing high unemployment and social unrest, culminating in 1887, when meetings in Trafalgar Square were forbidden, and a free-speech demonstration was forcibly suppressed in the 'Battle of Bloody Sunday'.[172] But the COS and those holding to the principles of 1834 were by this time losing ground in the intellectual battle, to a combination of forces believing that in the broader field of social policy, and having regard to the needs of public order, *laissez-faire* in the social field could no longer be enough.[173]

Other distinctive factors were also at work – the gradual democratising effect of Parliamentary reform, the rise of mass unionism, exemplified in the success of the match girls' strike at Bryant and May in 1888 and of the dock strike of 1889, and the appearance of a variety of socialist organisations, which would lead on to the direct representation of labour in Parliament.[174]

Governments, meanwhile, though still for the most part dominated by upper and middle class interests, could on occasion bring more hopeful results than the 1834 Royal Commission on the Poor Law. Through the century, successive Governments did enact, in *ad hoc* fashion and often under pressure, important legislation on conditions of work, housing, sanitation, education and the organisation of local government. This produced, though very gradually, improvements in conditions for the most vulnerable, or for the working classes and the community at large.

Committed figures within the Government machine could often be vital catalysts in bringing about these changes. In this respect, the career of the Benthamite[175] Edwin Chadwick is of particular interest. A prominent figure in the Poor Law Commission, he incurred much opprobrium for his enthusiastic support of the new draconian regime, but in 1846, he testified to a Parliamentary Select Committee *against* the Poor Law Commissioners for maladministration in the Andover case (alluded to in the main text).Turning his energies to public health, he was appointed in 1847 to a new Royal Commission on the sanitary condition of London. This led in 1848 to the establishment of a national Board of Health, which was able to take action in the cholera outbreak of that year. Dr James Kay (later Sir James Kay-Shuttleworth) was another figure in the Chadwick mould. He served with Chadwick on the Poor Law, and on the enquiry into the sanitation of London, but was also an important educational reformer, who in1846 instituted the pupil-teacher system.

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[171] 'Cringe or Starve', in the popular rendition – Englander D, op.cit. p 29

[172] Harrison J F C, *Late Victorian Britain.* Fontana (1990), pp 197-8.

[173] Stedman Jones, op.cit. p 296 -7.

[174] Harrison J. F.C. op.cit. pp 141-56

[175] Follower of Jeremy Bentham, originator of Utilitarianism, a social theory which advocated the organisation of society to secure the greatest happiness for the greatest number. Through adherents like Chadwick, the system influenced various forms of Government intervention in the social field, some of them clearly beneficial, but also including the Poor Law, which provides an example of a measure designed to please those ' for whom' but not necessarily those ' to whom' it is applied.

Turning to the concern in the wider community about social problems, it is noteworthy that Dickens satirized (perhaps unfairly) Kay's pupil-teacher system in his novel *Hard Times* (1854), but Dickens's attack on what he perceived as the unimaginative rote-learning of this system, was only a part of a wider attack on industrial society and Benthamite utilitarianism, portrayed in the bleak lives of workers in his fictional 'Coketown'. Thomas Carlyle had raised this same 'condition of England' question in his *Past and Present* in 1843 (*Hard Times* is inscribed to him), and other novels of the time began to take up the theme. Notable among them were Disraeli's *Sybil or the Two Nations* (1845), and Elizabeth Gaskell's *Mary Barton, A Tale of Manchester Life* (1848), and *North and South* (1855), set in a fictional cotton town, in both of which class relationships and industrial strife are major themes.

But the journalist Henry Mayhew's investigations of poverty signalled a shift of interest to conditions in the capital. He published eighty-two 'letters' in the *Morning Chronicle* (of the order of 10,000 words each) between October 1849 and December 1850, based on transcriptions of interviews with the poor themselves. Thompson says that the series 'seized public interest in a way which has scarcely ever been equalled in British journalism'[176]. Thereafter, Mayhew's *London Labour and the London Poor* began to appear serially in 1851, and ten years later an enlarged edition appeared in four volumes, in which some of the *Morning Chronicle* letters were reprinted.

Two examples from Mayhew's reportage may be noticed, which relate to some of the art works considered in the main text. Thompson reprints a number of the *Chronicle* letters in a chapter titled *The Slop-Workers and Needlewomen*. All the letters contain accounts in the interviewee's own words. One girl says:

> I make moleskin trowsers [sic], I get 7d and 8d a pair. I can do two pairs in a day, and twelve when there is full employment in a week. But some weeks I have no work at all. I work from six in the morning to ten at night; that is what I call my day's work...Taking one week with another, all the year round I don't make above 3s clear money a week.Many young girls at the shop advised me to go wrong....There isn't one young girl can get her living by slop work. The masters all know this, but they wouldn't own to it of course[177].

(See Chapter 1 of the main text).

In Volume 3 of *London Labour and the London Poor*', Mayhew describes a scene he witnessed of casuals queuing outside an 'Asylum for the Houseless Poor'. (This scene is discussed in Chapter 3 of the main text, in connection with Luke Fildes's illustration of the same subject for the *Graphic*). Mayhew accompanies the casuals when they enter the Refuge, and comments:

> It is a marvellously pathetic scene. Here is a herd of the most wretched and friendless people in the world, lying down close to the earth as sheep; here are some two

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[176] Thompson E P and Yeo E, (eds) *The Unknown Mayhew, Selections from the Morning Chronicle 1849-50*, Penguin (1971), Preface, p.7. (Now 'unknown', that is, in comparison with the '*London Labour*' subsequently published).

[177] Thompson and Yeo, ibid, pp 175 - 6

> centuries of outcasts, whose days are an unvarying round of suffering, enjoying the only moments when they are free from pain and care – life being to them but one long painful operation as it were, and sleep the chloroform which, for the time being, renders them insensible[178].

The novelists and Mayhew did much to raise public awareness of the social problems of the age, and from this time there was a growing interest specifically in the condition of the poor in London. One view put forward was that the poorer areas lacked a 'resident gentry' to provide the necessary leadership and example, an idea which bore fruit in Toynbee Hall, a University settlement in the East End, inaugurated in 1883.[179] In 1882, Walter Besant had published a novel *All Sorts and Conditions of Men* which led to a rather different kind of excursion into the East End - the building of a 'People's Palace'. The fictional plot imagines a wealthy young woman, venturing to live incognito in the East End, establishing a 'Palace of Delight' – the kind of 'fancy' Dickens would have loved. Amazingly, just such a Palace was built, on a magnificent scale, and opened in 1887. Parts of it remain, incorporated into Queen Mary College[180]

But it was Andrew Mearns, in the worsening economic conditions in London in the 1880s, who raised the temperature of debate, with his pamphlet *The Bitter Cry of Outcast London* (1883). The pamphlet was given wide publicity by W T Stead[181] in the *Pall Mall Gazette*, and created an immediate sensation. The pamphlet describes the poverty and appalling housing conditions in parts of east London, and the degradation resulting from them. It is indeed an emotional and 'bitter cry', yet Mearns says:

> *So far from making the worst of our facts for the purpose of appealing to emotion, we have been compelled to tone down everything, and wholly to omit what most needs to be known, or the ears and eyes of our readers would have been insufferably outraged.* [182] [Mearns's italics].

Even so, the pamphlet is considered to have been a major influence on the setting up of the Royal Commission on the Housing of the Working Classes, 1884-5, and on subsequent legislation[183].

Discussing the changing perceptions of these problems among the upper classes in the 1880s, Harrison quotes Beatrice Webb as ascribing this to 'a growing uneasiness, amounting to conviction, that the industrial organisation, which had yielded rent, interest and profits on a stupendous scale, had failed to provide a decent livelihood and tolerable conditions for the

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178 Neuburg V, (ed.), Mayhew H, *London Labour and the London Poor*, Penguin (1985), pp 441 – 42

179 Stedman Jones G, op.cit. pp 257-9

180 Small H, Introduction (pp x – xxv), to Besant W, *All Sorts and Conditions of Men* OUP (1997).

181 Stead also assisted William Booth in the writing of his *In Darkest England and the Way Out* (1890).

182 Mearns A,' The Bitter Cry of Outcast London' (1883) in Keating P (ed), *Into Unknown England, 1866-1913, Selections from the Social Explorers*, Fontana (1976) p 93.

183 Ibid, p 91.

majority of the inhabitants of Great Britain[184] . But what was a 'decent livelihood', and to what extent was it failing to be delivered? Moreover, was the COS right to insist that charity and the Poor Law were together sufficient provision for those without such a livelihood? It was to answer these questions that in 1886, Charles Booth began his mammoth work[185], in which social investigation moved from the anecdotal to the scientific. His findings were published at intervals from 1889 onwards, and his work, when completed in 1903, ran to 17 volumes. His main finding was that about one-third of the population of London lived at or below the line of poverty, a measured level of basic need. Harrison comments that:

> Later critics[186] have objected to some of Booth's methods, which were perhaps not as value-free as he imagined. Nevertheless, the impact of *Life and Labour* on the thinking of all concerned with social problems at the end of the nineteenth century would be hard to exaggerate. For the first time an attempt had been made to measure poverty systematically, to define its nature and analyse its causes'[187].

Seebohm Rowntree, further refining Booth's methods, came to similar conclusions for the provincial city of York, which suggested widespread poverty in the provinces as well as in London. With this new understanding of the extent of the problem, and of its root cause in chronically low or intermittent income rather than in personal delinquency, it became possible at last to foresee rational solutions.

What emerges from this survey is a picture of a society slowly adjusting to unprecedented change. The response to widespread poverty was an oppressive Poor Law, but private charitable giving on a huge scale. And throughout the period, Victorians were intensely interested in the 'condition of England', as is demonstrated in frequent Governmental enquiries, the work of novelists, and of investigations by journalists and others with no official connection. What cannot be said is that 'Victorians did not want to know' about the condition of their society, or that artists could remain unaware of the possibilities for the representation of social problems.

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184 Harrison J F C, op.cit., p 190.

185 Booth C, *Life and Labour of the People of London*, (1886-1903)

186 See Gertrude Himmelfarb, extensively in *Poverty and Compassion, The Moral Imagination of the Late Victorians*, Vintage Books, New York (1991). She deals similarly with Mayhew in *The Idea of Poverty*, Faber and Faber (1984).

187 Harrison J F C, op.cit. p 187

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